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Western Story Magazine

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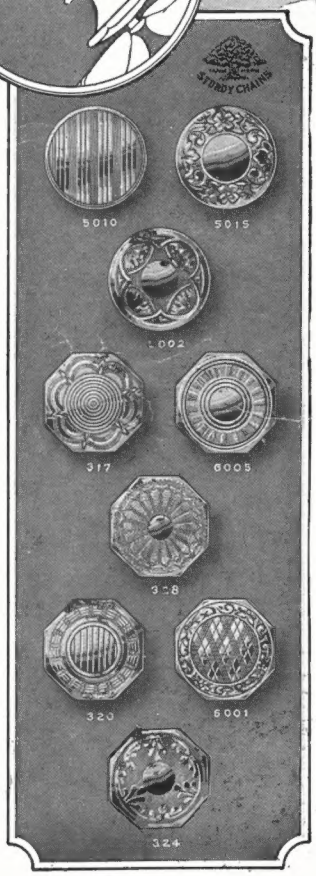

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"When I started on your course I was a carpenter's helper, earning around $5.00 a day. Now I make from $30 to $50 a day and am busy all the time. Use this letter if you want to—I stand behind it."
J. R. Morgan, Delaware, Ohio.

It's your own fault if you don't earn more. Blame yourself if you stick to your small pay job when I have made it so easy for you to earn $3500 to $10,000 a year as an electrical expert. Electrical Experts are badly needed. Thousands of men must be trained at once. One billion dollars a year is being spent for electrical expansion and everything is ready but the men. Will you answer the call of this big pay field? Will you get ready now for the big job I will help you get? The biggest money of your life is waiting for you.

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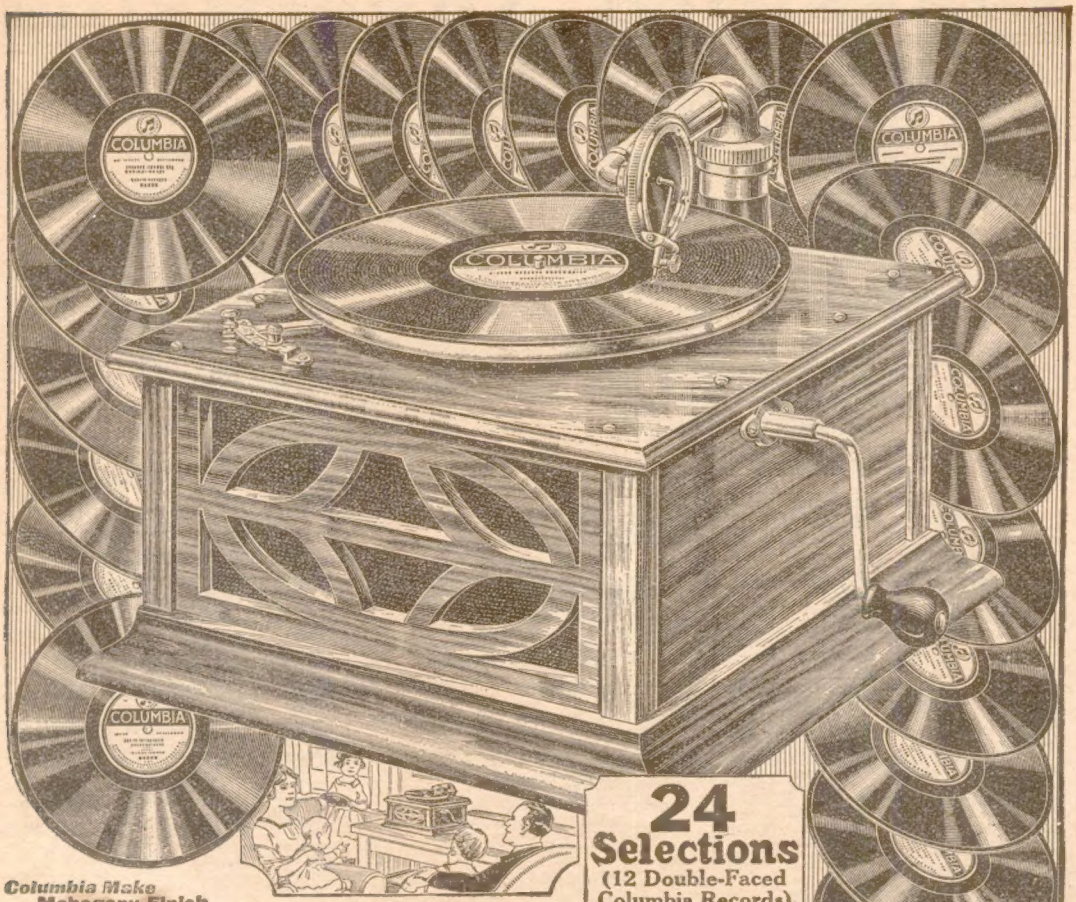

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(Continued on third page following)

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All right. I'll tell you a quick, easy way to accomplish all this. If you don't take it you are the only loser. You are the only one who will have to face the accusing finger of the man you might have been. If you do take it you'll thank me the rest of your life for putting this information in your hands. For now it is possible for you to quickly enjoy bigger earnings, and have all the joys in life that your bigger self demands. If this was a guess I couldn't print it. I know it to be a certainty. It is proved by the cases of thousands of other men who have done exactly the same thing. Listen.

Take any ten average men who are in blind alley jobs at low pay. Analyze each case without prejudice. You'll find that every one of them is solely and entirely to blame for his poor earning power. Every one of them has had a golden opportunity. They either have failed to recognize it, or, recognizing it, lacked the courage to follow it up. But now comes your chance. If this page doesn't bring you a big increase in salary—quick—you have no one to blame but yourself. **By J. E. Greenslade**

What It Brought These Men

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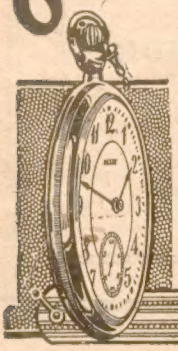

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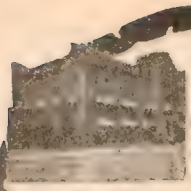

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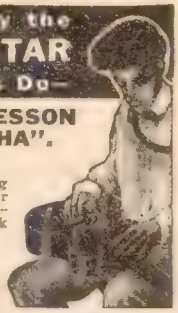

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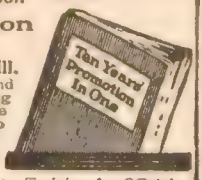

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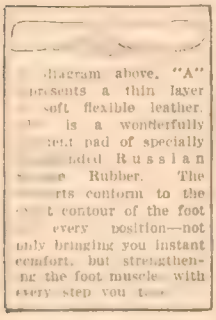

[illegible] diagram above, "A" [illegible] presents a thin layer [illegible] soft flexible leather. [illegible] is a wonderfully [illegible] pad of specially [illegible] Russian [illegible] Rubber. The [illegible] conform to the [illegible] contour of the foot [illegible] every position—not only bringing you instant comfort, but strengthening the foot muscles with every step you take.

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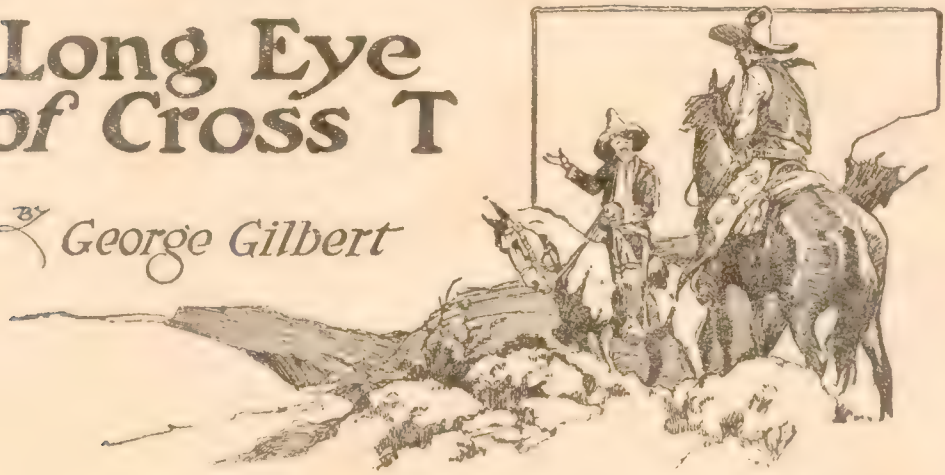
Long Eye of Cross T

By George Gilbert



CHAPTER I.

WHICKER OF A BRONC.

I'M plumb tired of prosperity; I've got too much of it. Look at what I've got: One healthy body, full of pepper and ozone; one top hoss and three stringers, all wise on cows; one good outfit—a good gun, a rifle, silver-trimmed saddle, a supple rope, bridle fair, spurs good, a new broadbrim, good new boots, and eighty whole dollars.

"I ain't seen Mr. Trouble in a dog's age. So I hunted up Smiler Andrews, primero of Circle Nine, and I threw my chest at him to this tune:

"I'm ridin'."

Smiler, who got his name because he never smiled, but had a flat-footed face, give a groan, and he made words run into language this a way:

"What's wrong, you spider-laigged, underflung, freckled-nose son of a stingaree? Ain't you been fed well and bunked well and not more than half killed with work? Ain't you a jassack, anyway, Marve Bricker?"

"I admit all that. But this is tame cattle country. You got fences everywhere; a girl can herd them and girls seldom fail around here. In fact, they're too numerous, since all the boys here began to take up sections and buy water of the boss of Circle Nine and get married and such. It's plumb civilized around here, and it's getting to be a she country. I'm a man—yet."

"I heard you the first time," Smiler growls. "Well, pick a girl and do like-

wise. The boss will give you a section cheap."

"Yeh, he could afford to, to anchor me down and get work out of me all my life. No, Smiler, I'm ridin'."

And I did, ridin' my top hoss, Foxy Ike, driving my stringers, Wall Eye, White Heel, and Grulla. The bunch gave me a fare-ye-well in the bunk house before I went, ragging me and swiping keepsakes and sticking in theirs to pay up, and all sorts of foolish things. Two or three of them owned up they wished they was going, but they was tied to the ground, like a hoss when you drop his bridle reins. They had wives and children and land and crops and all such foolishness. Since irrigation came to the Circle Nine valley, things was sure too lazylike. No worry about rain; rustlers all gone, and law and order firm in the saddle; in short, nothing there but prosperity and peace and pie. Shucks! What's the use? Either you are, or you ain't. You're a cowboy or a granger. A man may keep those tame cattle and feed them regular and think he's a cattle king, but he's not. He's a feeder of cattle, not a herdsman.

Now take me. I'd been brought up to cattle. My dad had been foolish enough to waste what old Grandad Bricker left him—cattle, good land, and such, down on the Pecos. Nothing mean about my dad; he just wasted it. When the bust-up came my mother was where she wouldn't be hurt by trouble, and dad followed. I knew how to ride and rope and shoot from a boy up, and I rambled, leaving nothing behind that I cared for but two graves. I was the only son they'd had.

So I'm not so old, if I have seen a lot of life. I'd worked where I liked it and quit where I didn't, rambling in between. When I was a boy on the Pecos, things was pretty wild, and I got used to them that a way. I don't mean by wild, just lawless, although I've seen more law and less justice than we had away back there where one man was as good as another and a little better if he could shoot fast enough. And no white-faced tame cattle. No, not none. We ran those big black, red, brindled, ring-streaked and speckled cattle with long horns and sharp points on their horns—cattle that could run like deer and were some on the prod. I grew up a regular he—a Bill Texican. I learned to eat meat without salt and like it, and oh, shucks, would you understand better if I went on like this and then went on and then some more? I don't think so. Let's get to going.

I rode away from Circle Nine, forking Foxy Ike, with my li'le string following. I was all right, but I was hot in one place—where those eighty dollars were in my pocket.

My, but those dollars did burn and kept a-burning. But I let them burn. I quit that green, green valley and got over the range by way of Lump Jaw pass, and then I was in dry and sandy land and things looked like home. There were all kinds of thorny things a-growing and mockers on the *chollas* and road runners, and once in a while one of the hosses would shy at a rattler and want to stop and nibble at some real sun-dried grass that wasn't hay. It was nice and hot and there was a dust cloud trailing behind us. Yes, sir, the picture was complete. I was almost satisfied, but when I thought of all my wealth I wasn't, entirely.

There was a town over in there somewhere—one of those one-lung chuckawalla holes where cow-punchers hesitate between thirsts and get away from when they've hesitated too long. I don't even know its name. They had a tiger there, and when I got done looking at him I was shy part of those eighty round ones and my three stringers. I knew when to quit. I'd had my fun and was down to cases. So I left, due west.

Days passed, me and Foxy Ike hav-

ing good times together. We had no use for towns. Every time I saw the smoke of a train I aidged away. We were plumb disresponsible, Ike and I were. Lawless old hellion, he was, too, shacking along, wasting no motions, eating up miles, heap full of savvy, too. Ike, he was a sort of dun, speckled with white, like he'd been full of cotton fluff. He was hard bodied, with clean, slender laigs and hoofs like black iron. He had pretty long ears for a hoss, and a li'le white spot right between his eyes. His haid was wide across, which is a good sign. I never taught him no tricks, for that's apt to make a cow pony a fool, because every one wants them to do the tricks, and they get all puffed up over the attention they get. If you got just a ridin' hoss, a li'le tricksiness won't harm, but a cow pony's got all he can do to savvy cows.

After we'd rode till I wasn't so sick of prosperity as I had been, Foxy Ike got all the alfalfa fat worked out of him, and he didn't fight on the bit so much when I first forked him mornings. I'd kept him because the Mexican I'd won him off at Monte claimed he was a good dry-land hoss, which he was when the pinch came. As the Mexican told me that after I'd won Foxy Ike, not before, I believed him.

We going west and the border curving up northwest there a way, of course we began to get close to it. We began to see some cattle, too; real, old-time cattle. The brands were nothing I'd ever seen before. There were plenty of wild hosses, too. I saw a few and plenty of sign. I'd see wild stallions on little rises of land, and here and there their mares scattered, and the stallions would whistle at Foxy Ike and he'd whistle back if I didn't lay my hand on his neck as a signal I didn't want him to answer.

After a few days of that sort of thing the land got a tilt to it and began to lift, a little at a time. There was a range ahead, and a fairly low pass, but I didn't get excited, because I could see it, for no matter what my eyes told me my common sense told me it was a long ride yet before I could pass it and get to the other side. When I was younger nothing did suit me like seeing the other side of a range.

I made through the pass, after two dry camps. Foxy Ike and I were plumb thirsty, for I'd divided with him my last water the night before. I noticed he kept edging along and sniffing, and I knew he sniffed water. At the other end of the pass a little green, up a blind cañon, caught my eye and Ike's, and he turned off the trail without being told. I took that for a good sign, and when he began to want his haid, to get up where the green was, I knew there must be water, so I let him ramble, which he did.

The walls closed in where the green patch was, and the cañon had a wind to it. As we turned the corner I heard the whicker of a horse. Not a whistle, from a wild stallion, but a friendly, inviting whicker. So I let Ike answer, which he did, and we rounded the turn.

CHAPTER II.

"WHO WOULDN'T GO THERE?"

I SAT there and I rolled one—a brown one—slow and carefullike, with one hand, while the other was dropped carelessly onto the saddle horn, where the reins were. Now, that's a good way to come into the presence of folks. You're peaceful and making more peace by getting ready to light up, as they can see, and you've got to hold your reins in one hand, ain't you? So it's all peaceful. But, yet, there's that right hand, on the horn, about two-three inches from the butt of your off gun, if you wear it right, but they can't see if it's there or not, because the horn and your hand are in the way.

"Buenos dias, señor," said a pair of

full red lips to me. And they wreathed up into a smile, like everything was all a joke on me.

Now you begin to draw pictures in your mind? You see a slender, black-eyed, olive-cheeked one, don't you? That's what I saw. Slender, black-eyed, olive-cheeked, and all that. But it wore pants—those wide-bottomed, flarey pants that Mexicans wear, and the hat on top was steeple crowned, with li'le dinglers all hanging round the aidge. There was lace on the edges of the velvet sleeves, and the serape was a splash—you've read about those Mexicans when they go the limit and then jump over. He had.

"Howdy," says I, but my hand didn't come off that horn none. I got that brown one in my mouth, dug up a match from my near pocket, lighted it, and puffed—once, good and plenty.

The feller had a clean, lean hoss under some scrub growth beside the li'le spring—kind of a fade-away buckskin pony. Foxy Ike sniffed toward him friendly, which I take as a good sign when you meet up with a stranger. If he's got a dog or a hoss and his dog or his hoss makes friends with yours, it's apt to be safe to trust the man. If not—beware.

How do animals know so far ahead that their men folks won't agree? I leave that to you to think out. I never could. It's one of those things that *is*, no question about it, like gravitation, gypy water, and wind.

He didn't have no gun in sight, but, shucks, that ain't fooling me. His left arm was not as snug against his side as the right, and that told me he had an armpit holster under that short velvet jacket and that the set of it was left loose so that his right hand could jerk over under his left armpit and come out carrying a buried ace. His eyes were bright, but not shifty.

His fade-away hoss whickered again, and Foxy Ike answered.

"You ain't needing all that spring makes, are you?" I says to him smiling my best smile. I wasn't looking for no trouble. I'm a man of peace unless you make me mad enough to fight. Then I fight all over, which is the way, if you want to keep from being whipped.

"No, hombre," he said, and he waved his hand toward it with a motion that said, as plain as the silver spurs on his boots, "my spring and all that I have is at your command, most noble señor."

"Then I'll light down and stretch my long laigs," I says.

I got my drink and filled my canteen. The water was good, if a mite brackish. That is, it was cool and wet and clean. After I had had what I wanted, Foxy Ike, who had kept back, like a gentleman that's had sense banged into him with a quirt when he was young enough to absorb it, came mincing up and got his drink.

Now, all this time that Mexican's been looking us over, both man and hoss. I ain't saying a word. When needed, I can keep so still there's nothing to me but silence, and darned little of that.

I looked Foxy Ike's cinches over, put one hand under the aidge of the sweat pad to see if it was wrinkled underneath, and then was about to swing up again, when the Mexican spoke.

"Tejano?"

Now, it wasn't popular to inquire into a man's whereabouts, where he last was, or his right name, if he didn't offer it, or anything like that. But he seemed to have a right good idea somewheres in his black-curled haidpiece, and I had nothing recent against me, except maybe some self-defense gun throwing, so I just up and nodded my yes to his question.

"She was right, then; she always is," he says, in a tone of voice like when a geezer is speaking of something he thinks a heap of.

"Who is she? And do you savvy

Texican talk!" I says to him, for he had used a good brand of Lone Star language. I had been ready to go ahead with him in real Spanish, Mexican bronc Spanish, or maybe some brand of Apache or Yaqui, which those velvety ones are apt to drift into when they get excited, according to what cross they came from. But here he started talking like a man. I took my hand off the horn and my foot off the stirrup and stood facing him again.

"*Si,* señor, I can talk Texican or Mexican or Spanish," and I could see he had a mouth full of white teeth then, for he was smiling, he was that pleased with himself over his wisdom.

He nodded his head and waited.

"I'll take white talk, if you don't mind," I says. "Now, who is she?"

"Donna Ynez of Cross T," he says, his eyes lighting up.

"Oh, your sister?" I asks him. If there was so many things to be answered, why not make him answer a few?

"No," he said, and his shoulders went up and his hands out wide. "My patroness."

Ain't it funny how a man can train his tongue to talk any language, but his hands and shoulders will talk what his mother talked? No American can talk with his hands and shoulders and hips and—oh, shucks, you know what I mean, don't you?

"How did she know I was a Texican?" I asked. I was facing him now and leaning toward him, to get a good view of his face. I'd begun to think it was all mighty funny. "And what if I am?" I put in, before he could answer. "And haven't I got a right to be?" I stopped him again.

"*Si,* señor, you have the right. No offense is meant. If you will go weeth me, all shall be made plain."

"Go with you! Where to?"

"Where I shall take you, señor."

"Do you see that rock over there?" I says, pointing to a big, flat-topped one behind the spring.

"*Si,* señor," he answered, after looking at it solemnly.

"That rock is as full of information as you are, hombre."

"*Si,* señor, but I am not to tell—much. It is an order."

"Any one that gives orders touching my case has got to give enough so that I know what they mean. I'm none of these mind readers, Ramon," says I. I called him Ramon because almost every Mexican has a Ramon hitched onto him somewhere.

"How deed you savvy my name is Ramon?" he asks me innocentlike.

"I get that a way sometimes." I says. "You got another name, perhaps Luiz? Yes, no?"

"Of a surety, señor, you are wise, as Donna Ynez is wise," he says, his black eyes lighted up and the lids wide open. "But my last name, my nom de familee?"

"I give that plumb up, Ramon," says I. "Family names are too various. What is it?"

"I am Ramon Luiz Sanchez Elmoras y Delgado," and his hat comes off and he places it over his heart and bows from the hips.

"I am 'Snub' Bricker," says I, imitating his motions, but not his grace. No Texican or American can beat a Mexican or Spaniard on that point.

Why Snub? My nose turns up. When you got freckles your nose is apt to, ain't it? Well, then, I didn't tell him that, though. A Texican would have guessed it without telling. When you've got anything like a snub nose or a lack of height or a grimpy leg or a chalk eye, or any of those things that make you look different from the herd, that's your name, and it ought to be.

Why grow something different if you're not to use it as proof that you're yourself? Now, if I go into a bank

and try to get a check cashed and say I'm Marvin Bricker, the cashier he asks if I can be identified. But if I tell him I'm Snubby Bricker, why my nose says I am. Savvy?

"Now, that we are acquaint," he says, "weel you go weeth me to Donna Ynez?"

"Now, lookit," I says, "I'm asking one question. No more. Answer me that."

"*Si*, señor," he says, holding my gaze firm and sure.

"Tell me this. Is she anything for looks?"

His eyes lighted up again. "Donna Ynez is beyond telling, señor. She is the most glorious, the most beautiful—*hermosa y brillar y*——"

"There, you've plumb forgot your Texican words," I said. "If she's all that, let's ride. I want to see her, *muy pronto*. No matter where she is at, I'm on my way. Who wouldn't go there?"

CHAPTER III.

"YES, I'LL SERVE YOU!"

I WAS afork before he was. A spry Mexican can mount pretty fast, but not as fast as a Long Bill Texican, and I'll tell you why. The Mexican has got to talk with his hands and shoulders and wriggle his flare-bottom pants around, before he can raise his foot to the stirrup, but a Texican, he just gets the reins, slams the hoss between those two long laigs of his, and he's in the saddle. I starts down the way I came out, but Ramon Luiz he calls out, "Thees way, señor," and starts up.

I follows pronto.

Now, that li'le cañon sure looked like a box. It pinched in, and seemed to end a ways up. But when we got there, it opened out again, and then pinched onto its stomach, like. It was just a lot of pockets, it seemed, and we came slam against a wall at the end of the last one.

"I told you the way out," I says, some peeved, for it seemed we'd wasted a lot of time.

Ramon Luiz, he smiled, and his fade-away buckskin began to nudge against the wall, and, sure enough, there was a hair-raising trail up it. Foxy Ike will go anywhere I tell him to, but he sure made slow work of that slantindicular, wiggly goat track. But after a while we came out onto a mesa, and it was breezier up there.

"Cross T is up there," says Ramon Luiz, pointing toward a fairish mountain that poked itself up not far ahead—about as far as we'd fox trot say, before sundown.

We rode along, not saying much, which is good sense anywhere. I was studying it all out. Who was this Donna Ynez and what did she want with a Texican? And why did she think I was one and think right? And how did she know where to send this Ramon Luiz to see if I was?

And why was I going to see her at all? I might have had some good girl back at Circle Nine and a section of good land. I'd never ran after a woman before, let alone one I'd never seen.

We kept racking along, talking only a little. The sun had got in our faces, and it was in the shank of the day. Not too hot; breezy on top that mesa. Nice cattle in small bunches, too, all marked Cross T. Just like that.

They were cattle, too! Long horns, sharp horns, wide foreheads, nimble afoot, heavy rumped—meat cattle, not milkers. Lots of red and black in them, regular El Toro blood.

I was beginning to think we'd have to ride part of the night to make it, or camp somewhere and finish the ride in the morning, before siesta, which I knew Ramon Luiz would take, when he pointed to a li'le dry draw off to the right and says: "She is in there; turn weeth me."

"How do you know she's in there?" I asks.

"She said he would be," and he turned his fade-away hoss. I followed.

Now, up that draw a way it was dryer yet, but farther up was a turn, and it was almost shut in by a bulge of blue clay. When we came to that, Ramon Luiz signed me to wait, and he went on. Pretty soon I heard him call, and I came on, too. I had that right hand on the horn of my saddle all right, close to that off gun. It had a queer look, and I was thinking maybe I'd made a fool of myself, but when I rounded that turn I saw Ramon was not a liar —or, at least, he'd not lied so far. Ramon he was out of sight, and his hoss, too.

Say, did you ever sit down when you was a yearling and think about some woman? Thing about how she'd look and how you'd think she was the most beautiful—*hermosa y brillar*—and all that sort of loco thought? Well, there she was, standing before the nose of old Foxy Ike, with her hand on the bridle, before I could say a word to warn her that Foxy Ike might take a nip if a stranger was too numberous at first. But he just nuzzled her hand.

She wore a tan suit, knickers, and—yes, a tan hat with a feather, a tan feather, and tan boots.

She smiled a li'le mite, and she had those white teeth like the tooth-powder pictures in the magazines show. And she had tan eyes, with little dancing specks in them, and tan hair that rippled, and her cheeks had some tan on them, but it couldn't cover the roses, and her lips—now I'm going to stop.

"*Buenos dios*, señor," she says to me. Then, to Foxy Ike, who had started to nibble at her fingers like he does mine when he wants sugar: "Quit that, you chuckawalla."

"Say, talk like that last sample, won't you?" I says.

She threw back her haid and began to laugh then, and I saw that when she laughed her tongue was apt to flick out and touch her upper lip right where it bowed most.

I swung off and stood before her, with my hat off. "Ramon said you wanted to see me," I says. "I suppose he told you who I am?"

"*Si*, señor," she says, slipping back into Spanish. "Shall we sit down?"

She pointed to some flat stones. I tied Foxy Ike to the ground and followed her. The sun was off our haids now, and shadows were coming across the draw. It would be right comfortable in there in a few moments, I thought, as she sat down. I sat down facing her, on another flat stone.

"I want you to serve me, señor Bricker," she said simply.

Now, if she'd made some long oration or given up some parasangs of she talk, trying to get my sympathy, I might have backed off. But she spoke up like a man. What was I to say, being a Texican, with a snub nose and freckles? I leave it to yourself.

"Sure, I'll serve you," I says. "What's his name, and when do I begin on him?"

CHAPTER IV.

TOO MANY SUITORS.

"NOW I know you are a Texican," she says, and she showed all those even teeth, bending over toward me and tapping my off knee where the patch was.

"How come?"

"You are so sudden in your thoughts and so slow in your speech, like Marvel Dick. He was a Texican."

"Was?"

"Yes; he died last year."

"He kin to you?"

"Grandfather."

I studied over that a minute. "If he was a Texican, how are you Donna Ynez of a Mexican bunch?"

"I'm not Mexican——"

"No one would think you were, with those eyes and skin and hair and such."

Those tan eyes of hers showed she was not a bit displeased to have me notice them. She began to talk steady, then:

"Listen, Señor Bricker. Marvel Dick came here from the southern States; he took up Cross T, made a ranch out of it, and never took a title, like other careless ranchers of past years. His wife died, leaving him a son, and he married an American girl, one of an emigrant outfit that got strayed off the upper trails and wound up down this way. They are both dead, and I am left."

She spread her hands out, palms up, on her knees, and gave me the chance to see how pink and soft they were.

"So that I am the only pure-blood Texican on Cross T, now that Marvel Dick is gone, and—I am in trouble, Señor Bricker."

"Now see here, if I'm going to be a help to you, you got to call me what my friends do—that's Snubby."

"That's settled, then, Snubby," she says, smiling right friendly. "Marvel Dick's name was Richard Tolliver Hermans, and his wife, that he lost before he came here, was Inez Burton. My own dad's name was Richard, too, and my mother's was Carver. My full name is Inez Josephine Hermans."

Now all this is just talking around the case, not talking to it or at it or from it. Talking around ain't getting you anything worth while, no more than walking around does. When you walk through or come through or shoot through, why, something happens, doesn't it? Same when you talk around a case. Nothing is said that can't be found out some other way. But when you talk through a case, or right at it —then—but you know how it is?

I ain't saying much. I'm studying her out. She looks too good to be true, but I never did believe half what I heard and hardly anything I saw that looked too good. But those tan eyes of hers had something besides sunshine in them. My sympathies were for trusting her, but my old haid kept on a-saying: "Now, Snubby, she may be all right, but consider it over. How do you know but she's got a giddy favor to ask that no gent would do, like shooting a man or rustling cattle or something like that? Suppose she'd ask you to steal, or something like that? Would you? Not unless you're foolish, and you are."

While I was thinking, she was eying me.

"I want you to steal three pearls," she says, suddenlike.

"Pearls?" I says, taking off my broadbrim and whacking some dust off it by hitting it against my laig.

"Yes; pearls."

"I ain't never seen none. I've read of them."

"That don't hinder none."

"I don't know what they look like. Be round and maybe set in a ring or something?" I says, whacking my hat again.

"You look at these," she says, opening her mouth so I could look inside. I'd read romances about girls with teeth like pearls. Well, her's were.

Then she closed her mouth, and her tongue came out and touched the fullest part of her lip bow.

"White pearl is the color of my teeth," she says.

"Where are those three pearls?"

"Down in Ocatillo. About three days' lope southwest."

"In Mexico?"

She nodded. "I've got to have them before I can be married," she says, and she was looking away.

"Married! I ain't going to get them."

"Yes, you are, please, oh, you will, and I'll give you—oh, anything——"

Her hands had taken mine, and then the words came tumbling out, while I let my hands be held, with a little struggle once in a while to pretend I wanted them for personal use.

"I said I was the only pure-blood Texican on Cross T. I am, but we've other whites. Marvel Dick, he stuck to the Mexicans for help. My father felt he must have some white men. White men had drifted in here at times, and no questions were asked of them, as long as they behaved. Cross T got to be a halfway stop for all sorts of adventurers, and some remained to work for Cross T. I am afraid my father was lax or too easy in picking men to work here. It began before I was old enough to realize what it meant, but Cross T became in time a resort for the wildest border rustlers, insurrectoes, and troublemakers from both sides of the line. By giving them refuge, our own cattle and property were safe, for as a matter of common sense, they let us alone, in order to have such a convenient halfway outfitting station and place of safety.

"Of course, as I grew up, I received attention from the younger men of the wild and reckless gang that came and went and worked for us. My father held them all in deadly fear of him, for he was a master of men, like old Marvel Dick. But when he died a year ago—he was killed by his horse stepping into a dog hole—I was left to rule alone, and it has not been easy." She sighed, and drew back, getting her hands free.

"The best looking and bravest man on Cross T is Sedley Yerkes," she continues. "He was our primero, and I kept him. He proposed marriage after father died. I was younger then. I consented, with the provision that I was not to marry for a year. He gave me a set of pearls—loot that he had bought from an adventurer. There were pins, brooches, two rings, and a string of pearls for the neck. I have them all but the three pearls I have told you of. They are at Ocatillo."

"How did they get there?"

"Because I am a fool, Snubby."

"You don't expect me to believe that, do you?" I says, and I whacked my hat onto my knee again.

"Oh! Then I'll prove to you I'm a fool. I am to be married to Sedley Yerkes in a month. Three months ago a crowd of mixed bloods and whites came to Cross T. Sedley Yerkes was below the line buying cattle. With that mixed bunch was one man that I took for a white man—Graves Porter. He tried to flirt with me a little. Every one does that. He was out in the *patio* with me one bright, moonlit night, and I foolishly showed him some of the pearls Sedley Yerkes had given me. He admired them and gave them back. Next day he rode away, and two days later I thought to look my pearls over closely. The three big ones, that formed a sort of pendant in the center of the string of pearls, was gone. I am sure he has them. He went back to Ocatillo. He deals faro there, I've heard."

"Whyn't you send out a still alarm and have him rounded up by some of your border friends?" I asked. It didn't seem quite clear to me.

"And let Sedley Yerkes know that he had cozened me out of them? Yerkes would be sure to hear of it, in time. Those pearls were my betrothal gift. He has asked to see them, but I've always managed to show him this or that piece separate. He doesn't know the three big pearls are gone. I have no way of matching them up out here away from gem markets, or I'd do that. The pearls are of a peculiar pink-green luster, to match the one in this ring."

With that she pulled a ring out of some cubby-hole in her clothing and showed it to me. It was a plain band of dull, yellow gold, set with one big gem. The color of it was hard to fix in mind, it changed so under the light, but it was a pink, with just a touch of green-gray tinge, very pretty.

"You'd know them anywhere, after seeing that ring, wouldn't you?"

"Same's a man would know your eyes, but I oughtn't to say that to the woman who is to marry Sedley Yerkes, ought I," I says, with a long face.

"No—I suppose not," she responds, and her face was long, too.

"But suppose this Graves Porter has sold those pearls?"

"He hasn't. He is keeping them to use to make me pay blackmail later. He has sent me a note that proves it. A Mexican, a friend of his, passed through here yesterday and brought me this," she says, and gives me a note, written in a clear, even hand. It says:

DONNA YNEZ: Those three pearls will be worth more to me than any one else, except Sedley Yerkes, unless you want to take them at a better price still. G. P.

"Why not buy them? You might get them cheap from such a cheap specimen of a man as this Porter seems to be."

"No; I know what his price is, and he can't have that price."

"You can't pay it, it's so big?"

"I won't pay it," she came back, with a sharp click of her pretty teeth together. "It is out of the question. Do you suppose I'd give in to a baby-faced man with soft hands like a woman and little blue eyes and he a thief?"

"I suppose he wants you?"

"Who said so?" And she looked at me with a queer, quick motion of her head, then looked away. "Are you willing to get the pearls for me?"

"Yes, sure. Why not? It promises action, and that's what I live for. But tell me one thing. How did you know enough to send Ramon Luiz to head me off, and how did you know I was a Texican?"

"I saw you coming——"

"I was ten miles away or more when Ramon Luiz stopped me."

"That's right. Well, I saw you coming, and no one can get in or out of Cross T without being seen."

"And you expect me to go down to Ocatillo to get those pearls after telling me a story like that? I know this thin air makes you see plain and long down here. You see a mountain umpity-ump days before you get to it, and you think a sacatone flat is a mile across when it's maybe ten-twelve. But you ain't seeing a man, meandering along on a hoss, ten-twelve mile off and seeing whether he's a Texican or a Mexican or a ring-tailed snorter——"

"I saw your mustache. Marvel Dick he had one, and my daddy did. All Texicans do."

"Well, I must be the liar then," and I was some overwhelmed. "But you don't expect me to go hunting pearls for a lady that proves it on me, do you?"

Her face was a sunset study in reds and pinks, and I saw signs of rain. Just as one tear brimmed over her left eyelid, I began to gulp. I'd made lots of women laugh before that, but never made one cry, and I didn't want to, either. I was afraid, once started, I'd not be able to stop the flood. Then, in a minute more, her face was white with anger.

"Marvel Dick, he always said that a real Texican is a good man to tie to when you're in trouble. Marvel Dick, he was a man, and my dad was a man. I ain't seen a man since my dad died."

"Hold on, how about this Sedley Yerkes?" I asked of a sudden.

"Never mind about him. If there'd been a Texican around, I might not said 'yes' to him. But I was a lonesome girl, and he was a man to handle men—oh, Snubby, why do you ask such questions?"

Then the flood started, or began to start. I jumped up, all ready to steal, fight, or start a revolution, if she'd only stop.

"All right, all right, Donna Ynez. I'll get them. Three days to go, three to come, say a day to get them. I'll have them here in a week."

"I'll meet you here," she says, and the flood signs all abated as she got up and took my hands.

"How will you know whether to come or not?" says I, dropping her hands so I wouldn't want to hold onto them no more.

"I'll know—same as I knew you were a Texican," she shot at me, out of a corner of her dare-devil mouth. "I'm not going to offer you money for going on this errand for me. I know you'd not take it, would you? If you would, I could give you—well, a lot."

"I'll tell you. If I made good, give me a job. I can do anything to cows or horses that needs doing. I'm riding for a job."

"That's it. We need a secundo at Cross T. When I'm married, if you make it good, you would be primero. A man's job. We graze so many head, I don't know how many, and Cross T has a range as big as a Texas county."

Then she called for Ramon Luiz, and he came jingling from up the dry draw, hands on his hips.

"Is Ramon Luiz O. K.?"

"Snubby, he is devoted to me. He is the son of an old-time peon whose life father saved in a stampede. His father gave the son to me for a playfellow and servant. I'd trust Ramon anywhere." Ramon Luiz showed his white teeth to us as he snapped away the butt of one he'd been enjoying while I'd been face to face with beauty's self, and too held by her good looks to want to smoke.

"You have money for expenses?"

"I've got thirty whole dollars," I says, being proud of it.

She nodded and went back up the draw with Ramon Luiz. I was getting ready to mount Foxy Ike when she came down, on a big, lean-withered chestnut that had a white blaze over his right eye. It wasn't a common bronc, but a big, hard-fleshed horse, of racer blood, and was well shod, by which I knew they had a farrier at Cross T, and a good one. Her hoss made my Foxy Ike look scraggly, but Ike he was some deceiving under that raggedy, half-shed coat of his.

"In a week, señor—I mean Snubby," she called to me as she started for the end of the draw.

"*Si*, señorita—I mean O. K., girlie," I says.

Ramon Luiz turned around in his saddle and laughed at me.

"Foxy Ike," I informs that equine, as he stood there, with one hip humped up and the other slumped down, with his ears fanning back and forth, "here I am going to get three pearls from a man I've never seen and take them to a woman I've seen once, all so's she can marry a man I've never seen; and all to get what I ran away from Circle Nine to get rid of—a job punching cattle. Now aren't men the limit? Except for the women, they are, Foxy Ike. Don't you never set yourself up to figure them out, for you can't, not none. I'm going to Ocatillo? Yes, I am—not. I am going to stay right here, get chuck, smoke a few, and then strike right north and get away before I get into trouble."

I got a little fire going and I cooked a little and ate a little, smoked a little, let Foxy Ike fill up a little more on the good grass, then I laid down and rested a little, and by that time the moon was up and it was a good time to sleep, and so I saddled up and rode—toward that point in the southern immensities where he had said I could find Ocatillo.

There was where I had to be.

I didn't know where it was, but it was somewhere. And if you travel you'll get somewhere, won't you? I always do. So I started, singing an old trail-lope song:

> Three days' travel, so don't go fast;
> If you start loping, we'll get in last.
> Dry-land going is best taken slow,
> A li'le fox trot is the best way to go.

CHAPTER V.

"I'LL TAKE THOSE PEARLS."

BY morning I'm where I don't see any Cross-T cattle. I'm in a thorny situation, to wit—going through a region of cactus, catclaw, everything that's got hooks to snag a man and hoss if they ain't careful, which Foxy Ike is, by nature. He knows the general direction, and I let him find the most likely lanes. Some of them are miles long, opening out into li'le wide spaces, where dry-land flowers are, and by that I knew they'd had a dash of rain not long back. Some of them were so narrow you'd think you'd not get through without trying to cut a way, but Foxy, he knew what he was doing. Trust a hoss if he's got savvy.

After a time we got onto what I knew was a traveled trace. Not a trail, but just a trace, where people passed maybe a few times a year, either way. Ike kept to that. It led south or southwest a little. So I let him slope.

I wasn't expecting to meet any one in that lonely region, but you never can tell, even in the middle of a desert, what you'll meet. So when Foxy Ike got to putting his ears forward all the time, I took notice. Pays to watch those ears, every time.

I'm innocent as a doodle bug when we came around a turn into a real trail. I'd heard one of their hosses whicker, and knew that they knew that some one, or at least some hoss, was coming. There they were, across the trail, four of them—three cowboys and their boss. How did I know he was their boss? He looked it. They had nice cow ponies or saddlers, as the case might be. Clean-limbed, short-coupled, wise-looking hosses; a bay, a black, and a pinto. Man on the solid bay was a chunked, easy-lolling geezer, and the high-peaked saddle seemed to cut him half in two. He'd roll when he walked, being fat and shin sprung a whole lot. Man on the black was just a sliver, and all in motion, head jerking this way and that as he looked about all the time, and his eye was some shifty. Man on the pinto was one of those wall-eyes that look mean enough to fight a sick dog for fun. The boss was on a big, quiet hoss, a bay with three white feet and a narrow haid, like he could be ugly, if pressed.

"Howdy," I gave them, which is a good word anywhere.

"Howdy," their boss answered. The others just nodded.

"How far to Ocatillo?" I asked.

They looked at each other, but it was the boss that answered: "Right smart lope, say two days, if you don't want to kill a hoss."

"I don't."

I'm studying them out, and they're studying me out. I see the Cross-T brand on those hosses. I see the man on the bay with the three white feet. He's sure one handsome hombre. He seems part of his hoss, and it is almost a sin how he's dressed. Lemme tell it now, so you'll know him. He had on boots of the finest cut, with Spanish red uppers. His bridle and saddle were loaded with silver. He was about six foot one or maybe two, and his shoulders were broad, his face smooth and handsome, in a reckless kind of way. His eyes were wide apart, but one of them had an eyelid that drooped—the left. His nose was hooked, like an eagle's beak, and his eyes and hair were black. He wore his hair long, and his broad-brim was tipped back off his forehead, so that the brim in back sat on that mess of dark hair. He was dressed in a dark-blue velvet cord, like a Spanish grandee, but he didn't have no flare on his pants bottoms and no bells on his hat brim. His hands were white and clean, as I could see when he pulled off his gloves and began to roll one.

"You might like company?" the boss hints.

"I'd be glad of it, Mr. Yerkes," I says.

"How'd you know my name?" he questions me, speaking sharp. There was a hint of iron in his voice, and the three punchers stiffened in their saddles at the word. I'm seeing right then and there that if he lifts his hand, they unlimber on me, *muy pronto.*

"You're riding Cross-T hosses, and every one knows that the Cross-T primero is named Yerkes," I says, perhaps foolishly.

"You must be knowing this range?" he questions again, hunching forward in his seat a bit.

"Not much," says I, shying off the dobe ground as best I could, "but a Mexican *pastore* I met yest'day told me Cross T was over there," I continues, waving my hat toward where I judged it was, "and that a big, handsome man like you was primero."

They exchanged some remarks in a low tone. Me? I'm quiet. I know I'm under suspicion. I know that I'd better go with them, as Yerkes hints, because they're on fresh horses and can run me down if I run, and can outshoot me if it comes to that, and there's no use running, anyway. I know at once he wants me with him so he can watch me.

"I'd sure admire for to ride your way," I told him, when they'd stopped whispering.

"Le's ride, then," he comes back, and he shook out his jingly bridle reins and Foxy Ike ranged alongside that Yerkes boy's nag. He was that a way, Ike was. Put him in a crowd with a hundred other nags and he'd range beside the best, same as a gentleman will pick another out of a crowd of a hundred low-downs.

As we rode, I told Mr. Sedley Yerkes that I was Snubby Bricker, from Circle Nine. He being Cross-T primero, of course he knew where and what the big brands were, offhand, that being part of his education as manager for a big ranch. He seemed to cotton to me on that haid, but I could see he was puzzled to know what was putting me down over the border on that lonely trail. So I had to make up a story that would fit; how I got the itch to ride, and never had been down in Mexico and wanted to see what some of it was like, and so on. He kept eying me, and then he began to laugh.

"I'm not asking any questions, because they'd not be answered. But most men that go to Ocatillo have a reason."

"I've got a private reason," I says, mighty short.

They all laughed at that, and talk loosened up. The three men I found out were "Lazy" Lon, the chunky one; "Slim" Martin, and Olson.

I might just as well said that the country back where I came from wasn't healthy for me no more. I let them think it, for it made me fit into the scenery not so bad.

"How'd you like a job?" this Yerkes boy says to me, after a time.

"What at?" I came back, eying him innocently.

"Oh, chasing flies or trimming cholla hedges or making water run uphill."

"I'm going to Ocatillo. When I get a certain job done there, I may take you up."

Now that wasn't saying much. Maybe I was going to Ocatillo to shoot it out with some one or to meet some one that had to be met. Men might go to such a place and get away, no delay. It had been done. Might be again.

They quit hinting at me then. I suppose turning down a good job convinced them that I really was what I seemed, a man on the dodge or with some illegal reason for getting across the line. I figured they'd seen too many such in their day not to feel at home in company with one more.

"We're going down to see about some cattle," Yerkes told me.

That was so natural that I believed it —almost.

After a while I saw he had had enough of me, and he kept in front, while the three men kept ranging up alongside. I saw the signal he made that gave them their cue for doing that. We swapped makin's and man talk. For all their hosses was so good, Foxy Ike kept alone. Yes, he did.

We camped at a spring that wasn't half bad. I lost a li'le to those three men at Spanish bank, enough to keep them good-natured and let them see I had more to lose. They mentioned two-three nice places in Ocatillo to play cards in or have a good time other ways. I'm strictly shut-up, not rising to any baits. I went to my blankets right early to give them a chance to talk me over, like they'd want to.

Sedley Yerkes, he had something besides cattle on his brain. I could see that. Long after the others had got to sleep he was sitting by the fire, smoking one after another, putting the butts into the embers. Then he'd get out a bit of paper he had and study that. It didn't cheer him up, none. Then he went to sleep.

We rode along comfortable enough the next day. That drink of real water hadn't hurt Foxy Ike none, nor me, either, after three days of none or gyp. He had picked up some good grass, too, and was feeling right chipper when we came jogging into Ocatillo the next evening. I was a ways ahead.

I had played my string straight. I hadn't asked a question about Ocatillo or any one in it. By now they had me sized up as a man who knew where he was going and why. That put me in place, as one who had business, same as they did, not as a man who maybe was snooping around where he had no business to be.

"If you don't take it bad, I'll go into town first, like's if I wasn't along with you," I let on to Sedley Yerkes, pushing Foxy Ike up along side of him. "I'll jog out a bit. It might be as well for all hands afterwards."

Now that was telling him a whole lot, wasn't it? He looked at me and he laughed. "All right," he says. "A man could find you if he had to?"

"Yes; it's a small enough place to find a flea in."

Then I rode ahead. I got into town say ten minutes ahead of them.

Now in a town like that there's generally a place that fits a gent that wants to get away in a hurry. Say a place with a corral with a gate to the south onto the open desert, and some sheds lounging along that a way, and a patio with a get-away hole or li'le gate on the south side. I knew there was, and I found it—a sprawling, low dobe joint, games in front, rooms behind, and when I walked in and looked at the faro dealer I knew there was no need to go farther.

He was a baby-faced man, with clear blue eyes and soft white hands—regular gambler's hands. There was nothing doing in the joint. I'd left Foxy Ike in front, knowing that Sedley Yerkes or some of his men would spend some time watching the hoss, to be sure the rider was in town yet. I was a puzzle to them, and they wouldn't let me get away without knowing more about me.

"Howdy," Mr. Baby Face says to me, skinning a set of small, even teeth.

"Same to you, and many of them," says I, hardly opening my mouth.

Then I went toward the bar, without trying to be friendly. In getting a cigar I made my money jingle some, and Baby Face perked up his ears at that. He turned the box down as a sign the game was not running, and got up. He came over to talk with me, as I was sure he would do. A Mexican came in off the street and made a sign or two to Mr. Baby Face that I was supposed not to see. Baby Face waited a while, making fool remarks that didn't count,

and then he shot at me: "How's things above the line?"

"All right," says I, meeting his eye.

"Want to hook onto something lively?"

"If there's money in it."

"There is. Come in here," says he, and he pointed to a side room, off the bar. He gave a nod to the Mex barkeep as he went in and shut the door after us when we were inside. It was a small room, with a table and some chairs, nothing else. There seemed to be only one entrance, the door we'd used. But I knew there was a panel or something, so if the boss of the joint was held up in there or got into a jack pot, some friend of his could shoot through the opened panel or secret door at the holder of the aidge.

It would be dead easy.

"Ever in the army anywhere?" Baby Face asks me. We were seated at the table.

"No, not none."

"If you know anything about a machine gun, now's the time to get rich."

"I don't, except I can turn a forty-five into a li'le one for a second or two or three."

He gave me another of his skin-back grins at that. "I was in the last revolution here," he goes on; "machine-gunner captain. Our side got licked. I made my peace with the winners, but there's to be another try later. I'm looking for wise men. I could get you on the personal bodyguard of Pedro Blanco."

"I'll think that over. I've got something I've got to do first," I says, and he skinned his teeth again, nodding.

"I'll have your hoss put in the corral or a stall?"

"Give him a stall, at the end of the line, nearest the open." And I winked at him twice, knowingly.

"I see!"

We enjoyed some sociability, and I'm looking Mr. Baby Face Porter over for pearls. He ain't wearing none in sight, though.

I went out and saw that Foxy Ike was watered and fed a whole lot. I had my vacant expression on straight when I left that stable and came through the corral toward the back end of the joint. Women were cooking at a dobe fireplace in the open, and I gave them a laugh. Like I knew the way, I started indoors, making through a passage that I knew led out toward the front. I saw a peon boy coming along in his bare feet, with a tray, and I suspected he'd made a trip to the li'le room with something special for some one. I saw the side passage that he'd come out of. I walked past it, making for the front of the joint.

When the boy had gone, I turned back and went down that li'le side passage. It ended against a wall, as I thought, and I found the panel. I heard voices and slid the panel back a bit. Two men were in the room off the bar —Mr. Baby Face Porter and Slim Martin!

"Did you get word to Yerkes that I had something to sell him that he'd be glad to get?" Baby Face was asking.

"Sure, just as you asked me before you left Cross T. I waited till you'd been gone as long as you said, and then I began to hint to him about those pearls."

Say, my heart about stopped then. It seemed that some one else besides me was after the pearls, and was going to get them.

"Does he know how Donna Ynez came to give them up?"

Slim Martin gave Baby Face one of his mean looks: "No; lucky for you he don't know you been pilly-pollying around after his girl when he's away, Porter."

"Well, what he don't know won't hurt him. She wouldn't have me, but I got those pearls, and Sedley Yerkes will give me two thousand five hundred dollars for them, part because the pearls

are worth something, and part because he will have proof she's been foolish over another man when supposed to be his."

"And he'll know you've been teasing around her then."

"Well, let him," said Baby Face, skinning his even teeth again. "Once I get the money, I'm going to slope south. Guaymas is ready for another rising and wants me to captain his machine-gun crew. Better join me, Slim."

"No. I ain't going to cut innocent peon soldiers to bits with those sausage machines, not none, Porter. To get back to those pearls. How you going to manage to get the money and not be killed by Yerkes?"

"I'll manage that. You just tell him I've got the pearls, but not how I got them. He can have them by coming here, with two thousand five hundred dollars cash, in this room. He can pass the money out of a hole in the wall—that one the drinks came through, and the pearls will be passed in, together with a note from me telling where and how I got them. And if it goes through, you get the five hundred dollars' share that I promised, and Yerkes will never know you knew in advance a thing about it all."

"I'd do almost anything for five hundred dollars, and this seems safe—not more danger to it than I face every time in round up or riding line or getting a man that Yerkes wants got. How will you get me my share? If Yerkes starts after you, you'll have to move so rapid you'll not have time to slip it to me, even if you want to."

"I'll give you half now, cash, and leave the rest with the joint keeper here, marked for you, to be called for afterwards."

"Yes, Aguilar would keep it for me. It's O. K., Porter. If you don't come clean with the five hundred dollars I'll meet up with you some time. I won't make no public holler, but you and I will drift together somewhere and some time. Where's the two hundred and fifty dollars?"

Bills were counted out, yellow ones, American ones, worth a good premium against Mex currency, so close to the border. Slim tucked them away, and then he got up to go out.

"Have Yerkes in here about nine," Porter says.

"That's O. K. Say, seen a tall, snub-nosed, freckle-faced geezer, the one that rode in on a Circle Nine hoss?"

Slim asked this indifferently.

"Yes, what d'you make of him? The hoss his own?"

"I'd guess so. Circle Nine gives its top riders a hoss now and then, I've heard, for private hosses. What do you make of him?"

"Down here on the dodge, I guess, or after some one."

"That's what we thought. Well, so long. At nine?"

"At nine. I'll turn down the box a minute. Play won't be big. You can step in here, and when you do I'll turn the box, leave the game a minute, and slip around back to get the pearls to deliver them. Yerkes needn't see who gives them to him. If he gets too wrathy after he gets them, you can get me word or something. We can't provide for it all ahead. I've got to take a chance."

"I never knew you to take such a big chance before. Are you just after his money?"

"Donna Ynez wouldn't have me; Yerkes always has held it over me, since we came into this border land as young fellows. He cottoned to them up at Cross T and got a sure thing. He was once as bad an egg as I am. But he played a sure hand after he'd got to be old Hermans' primero. I've got a chance to get even with them both now. I'll get his money and leave him with something that will make them both unhappy. You don't suppose he's just

going to hand her back those pearls, do you, and let it go at that?"

"I don't know, and don't care."

"He'll make her life a hell over those pearls. I know Sed Yerkes. He's a smiler outside, but he's some poison jealous underneath."

"I suppose so. So long. At nine."

"At nine, yes."

Then they was gone. I stole out of that side passage and out down the main one to a door leading outside. I was lucky not to meet up with any one. I came in the front door innocentlike.

"Been seeing the town?" Porter asks as I mosey in through that front door, whipping in sudden and to the side like a man will that expects maybe something from behind.

"A few," I says. "Not much to see. How about a bunk?"

"Ask Aguilar," he comes back, and he points out a dark-complected, wizened old fellow that had just come in behind the bar and was talking with the barkeep.

Yes, they had a bunk, Aguilar admitted, after Porter had flashed him a sign that I caught. Porter told Aguilar to give me the room next to his own, that is, next to Porter's. He led me off behind the bar into a nest of cubbyholes like those dobes are apt to have, and he opened the door of one. It had a clean truckle bed, with some blankets on it that were not so bad.

I laid down without taking off my guns. I wanted to study things out. If I'd known where those pearls were, I'd make a quick move or two, forked Foxy Ike, and taken my chances. But I didn't. To stick up Porter in the joint would be foolish, for he might have the pearls cached somewhere.

Now I was plumb tired, and the bed got softer and softer. First I knew I was broad awake, and it was dark, and some one was moving in the room next to mine. I knew I'd been asleep. But how long? I was frightened. I'd missed my chance; the pearls had gone to Yerkes, I thought. Then I heard the man next door come out into the passage and stand a minute. Next I heard him come in front of my door. That was my cue to breathe mighty strong, like I was asleep. I heard the door handle rattle a little, then more. Then I heard a knock. I let him wake me up good and plenty before I gave him a sleepy answer.

"Who is it? You perforated blang-busted idiot, get out. This is my bunk."

"It's Porter; open up and lemme talk," he says.

I stumbles out of bed and lets him in.

"Don't light up," he says, whispering. "Have you thought that over that I spoke about—going with the new revolution?"

"Sure I have. I've made up my mind to go," I says. "My business here will be short."

"Mine, too. I'm going to slope."

"That's pretty sudden, ain't it? All right." And I yawned out loud.

"Listen," he says; "I'm going to slope to-night. It's eight now. The joint is just beginning to hum. Old Aguilar is dealing in my place for a minute. You be down to the stables at just about five minutes to nine. Have your hoss ready for the trail. I'll have mine there, in care of a Mex lad I can trust. Be ready. I may come on the run. We'll ride south together."

"All right. Fact is, I've done my business here already," I says, and I gave a li'le low chuckle.

"You're some rapid. I didn't hear any shooting."

"No. Well, the excitement will break out to-morrow," I responds, to mystify him.

He studied on that a minute; then he got up to go. "You puzzle me, all right," he says, "but if you ride south with me to-night you won't be sorry. I'll be a leader under Guaymas, all right,

and can put you on the *jefe politico's* bodyguard."

"All right."

"Don't go to sleep again."

"No."

You bet I didn't. After he'd gone I began to think it out. Did he have the pearls with him? I figured he did. He'd been to his cache in his room and got them and all else that he wanted for a quick slope. He figured Yerkes would be after him, and he planned to be some absent. No use to go through his room, then. How to get the pearls without a row and running fight?

First I figured I'd get old Foxy Ike. I lounged downstairs. Old Aguilar gave me a quick look that told me he was out of it. To him I was just a dry-land rider who wanted to hide up a few days. Porter never looked at me at all. He was dealing, slow, to three-four early players.

I figured Porter'd have his war bags packed with grub, so I wasn't worrying. I strolled out onto the street, seeing nothing of the Yerkes crowd. I got along beside the buildings and out to the stable. About the time Foxy Ike was saddled and ready I heard another hoss coming, and the *cholla* leading him whispered to my boy.

He left Porter's hoss, a roan, as I could make out by the match I lit to get a smoke going, close to where Ike's haid was sticking out of his stall onto the corral. He left the hoss with my boy after I'd given him some money to get him some tobacco with. My boy told him I was a don, with a big D, or something like that, and he believed it when he saw the money.

"I leave the *caballos* with you," I says to my boy. "I aim to be back in a minute."

"As you please, señor."

I went back through the corral again, to the house. I passed the dobe fireplaces and got into the back door without being seen. I stumbled along the passage, found the side passage, and crept in and waited.

I could hear the sounds from the joint on the other side of the room where the panel was. Then they got louder for a minute, and then I heard chairs scuffing in that li'le room. I heard Yerkes, and afterwards Slim Martin and the other two. They were talking of everything, just to kill time, I suppose, expecting they were being listened to.

"I wish I knew what there is to it; or how he got those pearls," Yerkes kept saying.

"Oh, he may be bluffing; we got to call his bluff," Slim Martin would say. Or the others would try to ease him off the prod.

I heard some one coming along the main passage, then along the side passage. I drew my gun.

Porter came along and bumped his forehead into it before he knew what he was doing.

"Put them up," I says, in a gruff voice.

There was a mite of light, and I saw them go up. I could see, too, that one of his hands above his head was closed.

"I'll take those pearls," I says, and I did it, the gun jamming his haid back against the wall. He had a li'le roll of soft tissue paper in his palm, and I could feel the precious pellets inside that.

"Yerkes hired you to get them for nothing?" he grieves.

"Well, what of it," I says. "But it ain't so." And with that I left him.

At first I'm thinking he'll raise a hullabaloo. But then I think he won't. He ain't advertising that he's been double crossed by a man while trying to sell those pearls to Yerkes.

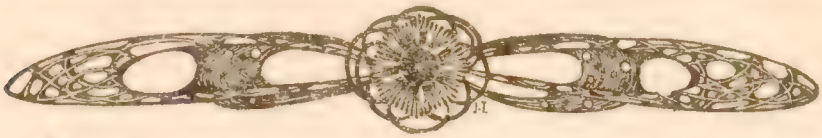
I got out into the yard, and I didn't meet any one in the passage. I got to Foxy Ike and forked him, leaving that boy staring, his dark face all gray in the moonlight. And then I had whipped

out the corral gate and was away. As I rode I listened for sounds of strife, but I heard none.

Now I'm no fool to ride right off south, leaving a trail like a stampede for all those shifty trailers in Ocatillo to follow. Not none. I ride say ten minutes, then I circle, to get to where other people have been making tracks, so that mine will mix up. I fetch a circle, or half one, about the town, and come in at the top again.

Everything's quiet, it seems. I aim to ride out the other side on some trail and then act according to what seems best, when there's a burst of gunfire off down there somewhere. I judges it's about at Aguilar's joint, and I'm not much wrong, as things turned out afterward.

To be continued in next week's issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.



IDAHO HAS A WOMAN SOURDOUGH

THE owner and "boss" of various mining properties in Idaho is a woman, Mrs. Ida Stedman. Years ago, twenty-five to be exact, she and her husband went on a honeymoon into the wilds of the State. Mr. Stedman was a pioneer and prospector, and his wife at once took up the task of facing lonely and dangerous trails, learning to wield a pick and shovel in mines and tunnels. For years she "sourdoughed" through the wilderness with her husband, and to-day she is known as "the woman sourdough of the Cœur d'Alenes," and throughout the West there are few mining districts where she has not prospected or operated a mine.

L. W. Stedman, her husband, was one of the first prospectors who went in 1878 into Leadville. In 1897 she came from the East to Montana, where she met and married Stedman. That same year they went into the wilderness from Kalispell, Montana, and were among the first to discover coal in the Crows-Nest pass district of British Columbia. The Canadian government, however, would not let them locate their claim. Later they returned to the Cœur d'Alenes.

She has known all the hardships of the trail and faced its many dangers. There were times, she declares, when to have missed the grizzly she killed, would have meant death. She has seen snow slides wipe out her home and all she possessed, as she and her husband rushed from the cabin to save their lives. But even now, when she has two promising mining properties which she is opening up, one at Wallace, and another group of claims in the Kooskia district of central Idaho, she cannot resist the lure of the prospector's trail. She still likes to go up into the hills and work in the mines, because there she feels nearest to her husband, who was her constant pal and fellow miner.

Mrs. Stedman has a son, and she and Donald did all the assessment work on their properties in the Korskia district. Her home is in the heart of the mountains in the Wallace district of north Idaho. It is a neat little log cabin, and when she lays aside her mining job she puts away the rough clothing of a miner and dons the dainty clothes of a woman. She has a quiet, well-modulated voice, and none of her feminity seems to have been brushed away by her arduous adventures on the trail.

Her knowledge of mines and ores is recognized in mining circles, and she is a director on several mining-company boards. Mining men of the Cœur d'Alenes frequently seek her advice in mining matters, for they recognize that she has a wide and experimental knowledge of their problems.

Sleeping Powder

By

William MacInlae

Author of "Fire Eye," "Leave It to Willie," etc.

AT exactly sundown Old Powder began to get ready for bed. His preparations for retirement were not the ordinary man's procedure. In the first place he went around to every window to see that they were shut tight, air-tight. He had put sandbags where the top and bottom halves joined, and he had also put bags at the bottoms of the doors to keep out the air. For Old Powder could not sleep unless his room was hermetically sealed. And then, when he had lost consciousness, dynamite could not rouse him. The truth of this assertion had been proved many times by jokers who made bets. All manner of noise-making devices had been coaxed up the hill in back of his cabin, and a veritable bedlam turned loose under its very eaves, but to no avail.

The reason for his phenomenal sleeping powers was simple enough. Before given his pension he had been boss of the day powder crew in the Little Gopher copper mines. He was used to spending a week at a time down in the lower levels without coming to the surface, night or day. He had his sleeping quarters on the same level where he worked, and he grew so accustomed to sleeping under the heavy detonations set off by the night crew that heavy noise was like a lullaby. His sleeping compartment there was like a sealed cell, and it had become almost impossible for him to sleep without just such conditions. If one only knew the secret, he could smash a window, and the fresh air, blowing in, would have awakened the old powder man.

But hardly had he completed his preparations for a night's sleep when a tap sounded on the door. He removed the sandbag with an annoyed kick of his big boot. When he opened the door, Herman Wesley, the new superintendent of the Little Gopher, stood outside. It was Wesley who had pensioned off all the old hands of the company in favor of putting on younger men. Old Powder had not been overly thankful of the change. The pension was small, for one thing; so small that he had to occasionally blast stumps for orchardists to help out in his living. He looked at Wesley now with a critical eye.

"What do you want?" he asked rather bluntly.

"May I step in a moment?" asked the visitor in a tone of voice that set Old Powder to wondering.

"Suit yourself. There's a chair inside," he returned colorlessly.

"I guess you don't hold me any too

warm since I put you on the retired list, eh, Powder?" continued Wesley, taking the offered seat. "I'm sorry, old man, but it had to be done."

"Shore, natcheraly—if you said so!" retorted Old Powder.

"I know, but listen. I need a watchman down there to-night. I gave Henly a vacation, and the man I had in mind to take his place didn't show up. You're the only one I know of that I can trust, and if you help me out during Henly's absence I'll give you back your old job or increase your pension —just as you wish."

"You mean you'll let me have my old place with the powder gang?" exclaimed Old Powder joyously, ignoring the pension part entirely, for Old Powder loved powder as does an artist his paints and brushes.

"Yes, if you want it. I'm sure in a bad way for somebody to watch the place down there to-night. To-morrow's pay day, you know, and all the cash is in the office safe."

Old Powder nodded understandingly, and then a disappointed look crept into his face.

"But I'd be worse for that job than none at all," he averred. "I couldn't stay awake. Everybody knows that all hell blowin' up couldn't wake me, once I fell asleep."

"You needn't worry about that. Nobody will bother."

Old Powder considered. He would run almost any risk to get his old job back.

"Really, I sure hate to take it, though," he said at length, after making ready to accompany the superintendent to the mines.

"It's either you or me," stated Wesley. "I promised some folks I'd spend the week-end with them. I'm late in getting started. I'll take you down and show you all you need to know. With everything locked up, nobody can break in, but it would go bad with me if it was known that I left the place a night without somebody there. I'll sure appreciate it, old man."

"And you will let me have the day shift back?"

"Yes, if you want it," granted Wesley.

Old Powder said no more. At the mine the superintendent explained the system of clocks that he was to punch at certain hours, and all the other duties of a night watchman.

"Of course it will be hard for you the first night," he added, "so if you don't get around to all the clocks on time I'll not hold it against you. Just do your best."

"Thanks, Wesley, this shore is kind of you. I guess I had you wrong. I'm glad you won't hold it agin' me if I go to sleep, because I'll warn you now I cain't control my eyes none when they get heavy on me."

"I know. If you fall asleep at all just crawl into the timekeeper's office first and park yourself on one of the benches. It's next to my office, and anybody breaking in might wake you up. So long, and good luck to you."

With the superintendent's departure Old Powder was left alone with a responsibility whose magnitude he did not fully realize all at once. The mining company was no small concern. Its pay roll was large, and the men were paid in cash. For one man to be intrusted with the vigilance over it during a night struck Old Powder as being rather an incautious provision. He had not been familiar with the workings of the company this way. When it dawned upon him that thousands of dollars were locked in the superintendent's safe, he resolved to keep moving about in the open where he would not be apt to fall asleep.

For the first few hours this was comparatively easy. Then his eyes commenced to burn with the strain of keep-

ing them open. It became a strong temptation to him to hunt the timekeeper's office. He found himself drifting that way several times, and it was by sheer force of will that he kept away.

He made one last round of the clocks a little after midnight, and then, in spite of his will, he found himself inside the office, where a string of benches lined the walls. He shut the office door behind him, and at once was in such an air-tight compartment as he could sleep in best. He lost consciousness almost while he stood, so quickly did sleep fall upon him. In a few seconds he was stretched out on a bench, his rhythmic snoring chiming with the squeak of scampering mice.

He had been asleep perhaps an hour when two stealthy, masked figures entered the office on tiptoe, shutting the door behind them. One of the two turned a flash light upon the sleeping figure for an instant, and then led the way to the superintendent's office. When his companion had followed through, he shut that door, and then both listened to hear if the snoring had ceased. It had not. Old Powder was as immune to sound as though he were totally deaf, thanks to the long training his ears had received during his powder days.

"Are you sure the noise won't wake him?" whispered one.

"As sure as a baby cuts teeth," replied the other. "I saw that demonstrated one night a while back when some of the boys bet me that they could set off a dozen sticks of dynamite right by his door without disturbing him. I took them up and lost the bet. Of course we didn't use all that powder, but we rigged up a system where one stick would sound like fifty. He didn't even bat an eye as far as we could tell. When we listened at the window afterward he was still snoring, just like you hear him now." Nevertheless, the speaker did his best to stifle a sneeze prompted by a fresh cold.

The two then set about their work. While his companion played the flash light upon the lock of the safe, the other began drilling. The metal was hard, made so especially to resist steel. Several drills were used, but they had brought a supply with them. As fast as one wore out, it was replaced by another.

Through it all Old Powder snored on. They could hear him even where they worked. They became less cautious and more swift in their movements now. When the drilling had been completed they poured liquid from a small bottle into the hole, inserted a capped fuse, and then lighted it. They stood to the sides of the room, for safety, while the fuse burned to the end. There was a muffled explosion and a breaking of glass as a knob of the hinge was blown off and crashed through the glass paneling between the two offices. The two men gripped their pistols and listened. Old Powder snored away.

"If that don't wake him, nothing will," muttered one. "I banked on it to make things easy for us. This will be a cinch. We can gather up the swag now and beat it. We can hide the money, then come back to-morrow and pull off a fake investigation. We might get fired because we didn't put enough guards around to watch things, but with a cool fifty thousand apiece we should worry, as long as nobody gets wise to our part in it. Old cotton ears in there will have a hard time explaining how he could sleep when all this was going on under his nose. If we use a little judgment we can throw suspicion on him and make him the goat, and have another chance later on."

"You'd better lay off on that stuff," advised the other. "Don't try to do up the joint twice in the same place. Anyway, you'd better invest the swag

into something safe and live off the interest on it. That's what I'm going to do with mine."

"Shucks! You got cold feet already? A job like this once in a while beats slow-coming dividends!"

The two set themselves to the task of emptying the safe of its treasure and picking up the scattered bills. With a sack apiece of the booty they were soon ready to leave. They stopped a moment to listen.

"The old snoozer's quit snoring," remarked one in alarm. "Wonder if he's had the bad luck to wake up," and the man reached for his gun.

"If he has, it's as unlucky for us as it is for him," whispered the other, stifling another sneeze. "We'd have to quiet him permanently and beat it. That would set the dicks on our trail and queer our investigation stunt. Let's take a look."

Cautiously they approached the timekeeper's office and peered in. With eyes now accustomed to the darkness they could make out the form of Old Powder still on the bench, his snoring subsided to heavy breathing.

"He's all right," whispered the leader, whose nose threatened to erupt in another sneezing fit. "Let's beat it out this other way and leave him to the surprise that's coming to him. We've got to bury this swag until further notice."

But hardly had they shut the door behind them when Old Powder opened his eyes and sat up. He had awakened a few moments before. The miracle had been the result of the draft let into the room through the hole in the glass paneling, made by the safe knob. He had not heard the noise, but a zephyr of fresh air playing through his mustache had ended slumber for him. He came to consciousness while the robbers were gathering up their loot.

Hearing voices, he had tiptoed to the hole in the paneling and looked through upon the wreck, or what portion he could see of it under the light of the flash lamp. He had heard the remark about the snoring having ceased, and had hurried back to the bench, feigning sleep.

But now, as soon as the robbers had gone out, Old Powder slipped out another way and followed them, keeping well to the shadows of the buildings. They were armed, he knew, and he had neglected to supply himself with a like means of defense. Nor did he know where there were any firearms about the premises. He thought of another scheme.

Still following in the dark shadows he made a quick detour to where he knew the powder house to be. This being locked he was forced to break in a window, but he did it by gentle pressure, so as to avoid noise. The pane fell in, and he crawled through the opening. He remained inside for several moments, but when he emerged later he held two tightly bound bundles of powder cartridges in his hands. Short fuses stuck out from the center of each bundle. He also had a roll of fuse, which he threw over one arm.

He hurried to where he had last seen the skulking forms and picked up their trail with a pair of eyes long accustomed to the dark. He almost stumbled upon the robbers, who were entering the mouth of an old, abandoned drift. He halted and waited till they were well in, and then he entered and timed the fall of his feet to theirs.

About a hundred paces in, the men stopped and began arguing. Old Powder crouched closed to the wall and listened. He recognized the voice of the assistant superintendent, but the other's was too hoarse from his fresh cold to be distinguished. Yet there was something familiar about it.

"Let's bury it here," said one.

"No; we'll wait till we get to the end. We won't be able to tell where it is if

we bury it here, and we don't want to leave any marks," said the voice of the assistant superintendent. "Every day a pack of kids comes into this drift and plays buried-treasure games. They might discover our marks and begin digging. That was why I was against this tunnel in the first place."

"They'd be sure to dig at the end, then, fool! Bury it here. We can count our steps as we go out. That will be enough to mark it."

"Yes, and you'll come back and move it a few paces either way. I'd have a devil of a time trying to find it—maybe have to dig up the floor of the whole tunnel," blurted out the other.

"That so? What business would you have in here without me, anyway, eh? Thinking of coming here yourself, eh? You're a smart one, giving yourself away like that! You haven't the brains of a polliwog, even though you are an assistant superintendent of a big company! Now we're working together, see? It'll take the two of us to carry on the fake investigation if we want to get the dicks to looking the other way. And it will take the two of us to worry a machine across the desert if anything goes wrong with our plans. I figured this all out before I invited you in on this game. Your help is worth just half the swag to me, and I'm going to play square with you. If you've got any thoughts of double crossing me, or beating me out of *my* half, your share will be a grave here where we figure to bury the swag, and I'll find some way of getting out by myself. Now what will you have?"

"You got me all wrong. I'll play square, all right," returned the other rather unconvincingly.

Individualism is never so well supported as among crooks. A half loaf may be better than none, but it doesn't look so inviting as the whole loaf, and if one is going to be a crook at all, why not go all the way? Why hang on to honor with one hand and to a crook's blackjack with the other? Such was the private philosophy of the assistant superintendent.

"Since that's understood, stick the lamp in the wall somewhere, and let's get busy digging. Morning isn't far off."

The assistant hunted a soft spot in the wall close to the base and dug a hole big enough to set the flash light in. He plastered earth around it to keep it in position while the other took the short-handled spade they had brought with them and began digging.

Between them and the crouching powder man the bags of loot had been set. Old Powder was in a quandary how to light his fuses and spring the coup that he had planned. It was not so easy as he had first pictured it. There was quite a distance between him and the robbers which he had to cover before he could make his scheme effective. How to get there was the question.

There was little time, too.

They had pistols. All he had was a dozen wrapped sticks of powder and a hoped-for psychological effect. If he failed, a bullet would probably spare him the disappointment. If he succeeded there would be a proud moment for him when the superintendent returned from his week-end vacation. He weighed his thoughts carefully; he was accustomed to performing his actions with easy deliberation. Handling powder for so long had skilled his hands against making false movements. Yet he was capable of direct quickness when the crisis came. This was attained in the days before great charges of powder were ignited by electricity. After cool and deliberate preparation of a long string of holes with heavy charges he would become a dynamo of swift action in lighting them all. In his younger days he had set the record of lighting the most holes with short lengths of fuse. It had been child's

play to him, and hardly a risk. Seemingly slow, yet he accomplished much.

He laid the bundles of powder carefully upon the ground and took several matches from his pocket. These he laid on top of the powder. Then he fell flat on his stomach, took up the bundles, and propelled himself along the tunnel floor. The sharp gravel lacerated his arms until they bled. Five feet, then seven, and finally half the distance was traversed in this manner, the long shadows of the loot bags hiding his going.

The men went on digging. Their backs were partly toward the tunnel entrance, and their eyes were always upon their work.

Suddenly Old Powder stopped, struck a match, and, simultaneously, it seemed, two fuses commenced an ominous sputtering. He was on his knees next, and his big voice boomed the sharp command clear to the end of the tunnel.

"Up with your hands !"

The two men had turned at the sound of the sputtering fuses. Their hands were slow in reaching for their guns, for they were not accomplished gunmen. At Old Powder's command they promptly reached toward the roof of the tunnel. They could gradually make out the powder man's form between the sputtering fuses, and perspiration stood out on their faces as they perceived what he held.

Old Powder spoke again. "You'd better listen to me if you want to enjoy life a little longer. You see what I got in my hands. Well, the fuses are short, and so are the lives of all of us if you don't hustle an' do what I tell you. You nighest me, take this roll of fuse I brought along and tie your partner's hands behind his back with it. Work quick now! I don't want to die yet any more than you do."

Old Powder gripped the binding of a bundle of powder between his teeth and passed over the roll of the fuse. The man, with nervous fingers, began to obey orders.

"No funny business there! Or I'll hasten things by smashin' these bundles together!" warned Old Powder as his quick eye saw a hand hovering near a gun.

The mask of the man whose hands were being tied dropped down from his face, and an involuntary exclamation came from the old powder man.

"The soop himself! Well, I'll be! I thought your proposition to-night was too good to come from a man like you, Wesley! You must 'a' caught cold, or something. I didn't recognize your voice. So you was goin' to make a goat out of me, eh? A nice little billy-goat to be butted into the pen! Good as invited me to go to sleep on the job so's you could pull this little stunt on me! I forgot to mention it, Mr. Wesley, but a draft of fresh air wakes me up the quickest of anything I know. Noise don't bother me at all. But I just simply can't stand fresh air. If it wasn't for part of the safe breakin' through the glass where I was sleepin', you might have succeeded, at that."

The lights on the fuses were sputtering dangerously close to the powder. The superintendent's face streamed perspiration.

"Good heavens, Powder! Pinch them fuses out before we're blown to pieces!" he begged.

"They *are* burnin' kinda close, aren't they?" drawled the old powder man exasperatingly. "Well, we don't need 'em any more."

With a suddenness characteristic of his surprising movements Old Powder threw the bundles into the hole that had been dug for the swag and grabbed for the guns of his captives. He did not even pinch out the fuses; they burned on deep down in the hole.

"Get outa here, quick!' he commanded sharply. "Wait a minute; take these sacks with you!"

The two men hesitated long enough in their flight out of the tunnel to pick up a sack apiece, and then made a dash for the outlet, Old Powder following close behind and lighting the way with the flash light.

Outside he commanded them to slow down, and then went on to say. "You can keep on till you git to the sheriff's office, Wesley. It's quite a ways, but don't mind me; I can stand the walk."

There was nothing more said for a few moments; the men were listening for the expected explosion back in the tunnel. None sounded.

Finally, to end the suspense, Wesley asked: "What's keeping that powder from going off, Powder?"

Old Powder chuckled with huge enjoyment. "Oh, nothin' particular," he drawled with exasperating deliberation. " 'cept it ain't powder."

"Not powder! What do you mean?"

"It's only a bunch of candles I cut the nibs off and wrapped up in brown paper." And Old Powder's chuckle was good to hear.

MYSTERIOUS OKLAHOMA LIGHTS

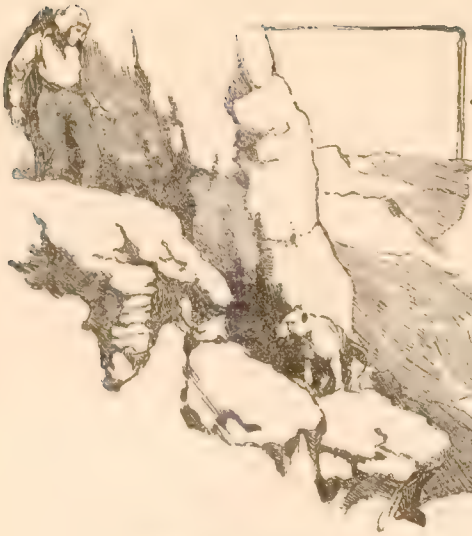
NEAR "Old No Man's Land," now the Oklahoma Panhandle, certain mysterious lights have been observed from time to time ever since early pioneer days. One of the lights which appears occasionally some fifteen miles southwest of Kenton, Oklahoma, has been classed as "audeon lightning" by several well-informed people. But the peculiar bluish-white light which has often been observed at White Rocks, eight miles east of Kenton, is of an altogether different nature.

The "audeon lightning" light moves about over a considerable space of hillside and level land, but the light at White Rocks remains in one spot, and it is bluish white instead of reddish yellow, as the other. In one respect, however, they are both alike: they may appear in either wet or dry weather, and they both appear at all seasons of the year.

The White Rocks, where the strange white light appears, are several large outcroppings of white sandstone, six feet high, and when the light appears, the rocks seem to throw out the white illumination all over the surface. Appearing suddenly it will light up a space for several yards on all sides, and then after ten minutes the glow begins to fade and it is not seen again for several weeks or even months.

No oil or gas is known to be near the surface of this spot, and while gypsum and traces of copper are known to be near, they are not known to produce these lights, nor have they in fact anything to do with them.

An old Indian legend says that the light is the spirit of the ancient fires which were kindled on top of the White Rocks and on Sentinel Butte, a quarter of a mile distant. For more than fifty years the existence of the lights has been known, long before cars or man-made lights were anywhere near the Rocks, and the Indians knew about these strange lights ages before the white man came to Oklahoma.



The Seventh Bandit

By Arthur Preston Hankins

Author of "The Lookout Girl," "Jerkline Jo's Horsetails," etc.

CHAPTER I.

GREEN EYES.

TREMBLING from head to feet with expectancy, Doctor Shirley Chalmette lay flat on the ground and held her bamboo fishing rod over the rocky bank.

Three times the big trout, bigger than any she had ever hooked, had darted out from a submerged mossy recess of the deep pool below her, only to whisk back again, wary and half alarmed.

Now he was coming from the dark recess again, darting this way and that —big, transparent, tempting.

The rocky bank above the pool on which the pretty young doctor lay was nearly twenty feet above the water, and sheer. More than sheer; it seemed to recede just below her, and she could not see where it dipped into the pool. All about were alders and fragrant bays, and over the wild hills above her, on either side of the creek, were spread miles and miles of blooming chaparral.

The big trout approached the bait and then darted out of sight in the blackness of his favorite underwater haunt. Once more Doctor Shirley Chalmette breathed naturally, and enjoyed the relief from strain. But her rest was of short duration. For, like a bullet shot from a gun, the big trout struck unexpectedly, and the next moment the battle was on.

In a twinkling the line went taut, while the doctor was trying desperately to scramble to her feet. So vigorous was the pull that the big fish gave the line, that the cork handle of the rod was jerked from the doctor's hand. She was not an expert angler by any means, and had unwittingly tried to help herself up with the elbow above the hand that held the rod. She sprawled flat as her support gave way beneath her, and her rod went slipping over the edge of the tiny precipice.

With a little scream of disappointment she dived after the vanishing handle. She touched it with the tips of her fingers just as it was going over the edge. She grasped again, frantically pushing herself forward with knees and an elbow. In her excitement she had propelled herself too far. She tried to draw back as she realized that she was halfway over the edge. But rocks and earth gave way under her and splashed into the pool below. With a stifled

scream she pitched headfirst after them, turned over completely once, and landed in a sitting posture twelve feet farther down, on the very edge of a rocky shelf which she had not been able to see from above.

She was entirely unhurt, and her immediate concern was her fishing rod. She scrambled to her feet to see it darting about over the surface of the pool. Into the pool a thousand inches of water was pouring in a cataract, but suddenly the sound seemed to grow in volume and to be coming from behind her.

Again the added volume rose and fell, and she turned about, impelled to do so by some strange dread.

There was a cave before her, running in under the cliff. From the blackness of its mouth two green eyes glared at her, and once more came the sound that had mingled with the rushing noise of the waterfall.

Shirley knew instantly, with a sharp tightening of the heart, that it was the roar of some savage beast of prey. She stood rooted to the spot and gazed at those fascinating eyes of shimmering green. And now other eyes blinked out at her, eyes below the level of the first pair. Her reason told her that she had invaded the den of a mother beast and her cubs, and as her sight became accustomed to the dimness of the cave's interior, she believed that she faced a mother mountain lion.

She had heard that the mountain lion is a cowardly beast ordinarily, but she realized that this case was different. A mother lion will not only fight for her young, but will attack.

Doctor Shirley looked about her for a means of escape. A glance showed her that escape was doubtful. There was a trail, animal made, that extended from the shelf to the top of the cliff, but it was all but perpendicular—a series of rock shelves, slick and worn, from one to the other of which the lion might bound and reach the top. But for the girl doctor to climb it would require time and ingenuity, and she was afraid to make a move.

Once more the threatening roar came from the cave and fairly chilled her blood. She stood there on that narrow shelf, white of face, with the pool below her and the lion's den before her, hemmed in on every side. She had learned to swim only the summer before, and could command only a few strokes before she was obliged to touch bottom. The pool below her, she knew, was deep and icy cold. She doubted her ability to swim to the riffle downstream, if the beast forced her to plunge into the water.

The lion continued to growl, and now and then she roared. Shirley dared not move for fear that she would spring out at her, when she would be forced to take to the pool. Her fishing rod and the big trout were forgotten. She stood there trembling, trying to force her mind to find an answer to this problem.

But there seemed to be no way out except through the deep waters of the pool, and her face blanched at thought of that.

She knew, though, that she must bring herself to it, so slowly, keeping her eyes on the two green points of light in the den, she began to turn.

There came a roar and a rush from within, and a squawl from a knocked-over cub. Shirley caught one terrified glimpse of a tawny, bounding form, and then she wheeled entirely and dived.

Her body clove the surface of the water, and the icy wave swept over her. She knew little about diving, and had forgotten to extend her arms and make a spear head of her hands. The impact of her unprotected head on the water nearly stunned her, and she went down and down into the chilling depths until it seemed that she surely must strike the bottom. Untutored as she was, she had not known enough to turn her head and body upward immediately

after she had struck the water. Nor had she been given time to take a sufficiently long breath.

The result was that when she at last bobbed to the surface, making frantic but ineffectual strokes, she was nearly strangled, and panic seized her.

She struggled, clawed out at nothing, and felt her legs growing useless from the frigidity of the mountain stream. She was gasping, choking, blinded, and upon her was the terrible fear of death.

Then everything went black, and she knew only that she was clutching something in frantic desperation.

And when she came from this black dungeon of despair she found herself upon a low, pebbly bank, with a man pumping her arms and working furiously to revive her.

When she was at last herself again she sat, miserable and bedraggled, and looked at him. He stood above her, smiling down. She had seen him at the store and post office at Canary Bend, and had been told his name. He had a strong, handsome, dark face, and his smile was reassuring.

"Feeling better?" he asked.

"Ye-yes, thanks," she gulped out. "What a narrow escape! Did you pull me out? Was it you I was holding to?"

"I'll say you held to me," he said, grinning. "I almost had to hand you one in the temple to put you out. That water's so infernally cold that a fellow can't afford to waste time when he's in it."

"Help me up, please," she said, holding forth her hands, "and I'll thank you."

He took both of her hands and lifted her to her feet. She was a little shaky, but fought it down. She tried to smile, but her effort was pretty wan.

"Thank you, Mr. Scanlon—isn't it?"

"Yes, Saul Scanlon; and you're quite welcome, I'm sure. But you've got the best of me. I don't think I've ever seen you before."

"I've been here only three days," she replied. "I'm Doctor Shirley Chalmette, of San Francisco. I'm stopping at Nicholas Gibson's, at Canary Bend. Vacation. Worked to death. You were pointed out to me the other day."

"I'm mighty glad to meet you, ma'am," he said politely. "What do I call you? Doctor?"

"If you please."

"Are you a real doctor, now?"

"I hope so. Some of my patients say I am."

He scratched his head in a boyish fashion. "I've heard of lady doctors, of course," he told her; "but I guess I never met one before. Why did you go swimming, doctor, when you're such a poor hand at it?"

"A lady lion, I think it is, lives in that cave up there," she replied, pointing across the pool. "I caught a big trout, and, trying to get in a better position to land him, I clumsily fell into the front door of her home. She told me that I wasn't welcome, and when she started out to make it more emphatic I took to the water. It seemed to be that or——" She came to a stop and shuddered in spite of herself.

"There's a mountain lion up in that cave?"

"Yes, and she has cubs. I've heard they are not dangerous unless attacked, but I was afraid to trust her in her own den with her young ones."

"You did right," he said. "I wouldn't trust her, either. What became of her?"

"I can't tell you that, Mr. Scanlon. I was in pretty much of a hurry for a little, and pretty blind immediately afterward. But where did you come from?"

"Why, I saw you there fishin' some time ago," he replied. "I was on this side, up in the hills, on my way home. I watched you a little, and wondered who you were. Then I went on. And, happening to look again, I saw you floundering about in the pool and—well,

then I just came down after you. Are you cold? You'd better get more in the sun."

Water was dripping from her waist and khaki hiking breeches, and her blond hair was pasted to her head in a comical fashion. She was afraid that she was not making much of an impression on this big man of the outdoors, and, for some strange reason, she was worried about it. Doctor Shirley Chalmette did not worry a great deal, usually, about what men thought of her. But this dark-haired, soft-spoken giant had made a singular appeal to her when first she saw him at Canary Bend. So much so that she had asked the storekeeper his name and occupation.

He turned and studied the bank in which was the lion's den, three quarters hidden from them, in their present position, by rocks and scraggly brush.

"She went up that kind of a path, there," he opined. "Guess she was tryin' to get away, and had to take a chance on springin' past you."

"I chose to think otherwise," said Doctor Chalmette. "I suppose you'll be gunning for her now."

He looked at her a little shamefacedly, it seemed. "Well, no," he drawled. "I'm not much of a killer."

"Neither am I," she responded. "In fact, my profession tends to make me just the reverse. But aren't lions troublesome to ranchers?"

"I reckon they are, ma'am. But they don't trouble me at all. So I don't molest them. I never kill anything but rattlers, Doctor Chalmette."

She looked at him with new interest. "That's rather strange," was all that she said, however.

He went to recover her fishing rod for her, and she noted with what grace he clambered over the stones and swung himself along the difficult creek bank, holding to overhanging limbs. The prize trout had broken the line and gone, he found. He came back with the pole.

"You'll want to be going home now, won't you? I'll show you an easy way back to the road. I hope you don't catch cold."

"That would be hard to do in this bright sunshine," she surmised. "I'm getting warm fast. My clothes will soon be dry. I think I'll take you up, Mr. Scanlon, on that easy way back to the road. I'm disgusted with fishing for to-day."

With Saul Scanlon in the lead, they worked their way down the little creek to the level of the rushing Falcon River, a green ribbon winding its way to the sea. Reaching the river bottom, they stumbled over nigger-head boulders toward a little cabin that stood out prominently at a bend of the river. To their ears, from downstream, came the ceaseless metallic clanking of a gold dredger.

"This is where I hang out," he notified Doctor Chalmette as they neared the companionable little shack. "Pretty place, isn't it, doctor?"

The spot was indeed picturesque, for the cabin stood out at the bow of the river's bend, with the green water racing directly past the door, and behind it were great, gnarled oaks whose sprawling limbs hovered it protectingly.

"Better rest a little before you hit the trail for Canary Bend," he suggested, indicating a bench beside the cabin door.

Doctor Shirley accepted it.

"And is this one of your mining claims that I've heard about?" she questioned.

"Yes, but I'm surprised that you've heard about me," he answered. "Just what did you hear—if you don't mind telling, and if it isn't too bad to repeat?"

She laughed. "You don't seem to be unpopular in the community," she assured him. "And what I heard was something about the dredger company robbing you. Not much, though. Will you tell me about it? I'm interested."

CHAPTER II.

FRANK EPNEY.

"THERE isn't a great deal to tell," said Saul. "I've got three placer claims along the Falcon River. One is below here; this is another, and one is a mile upstream. I bought 'em from a fellow who needed ready cash about six months ago.

"All up the river there are placer claims, owned by people who are waiting for the dredge to work up to them. There were a lot down the river, too, but the dredger has passed through them now. There's a lot of gold here, but it takes a dredge to get it out. The dredger company works these claims for the owners and gives them a percentage of the clean-up. When they finished with my lower claim they made a settlement with me, which wasn't altogether satisfactory. To be explicit, they handed me two hundred and fifty bucks and told me that was all that was coming to me. I figure I ought to have received about fifteen hundred. Other claim owners below here figure about the same, but the company doesn't give anybody a chance to check up on 'em. So I notified the superintendent, Frank Epney, that I wanted what was comin' to me on this claim. I told him I might hurt him if matters turned out otherwise. So I'm waiting for them to work up to me, to find out whether Ep gets hurt or not. That's about all there is to the story."

"I've met Mr. Epney," she said thoughtfully. "A tall, lank, sandy man with freckles and a stoop, isn't he? I'm not quite sure of the name."

"That's the bimbo," Saul told her.

"And what will you do to him," she asked with interest, "if your returns from this claim don't suit you?"

"Just hurt him," Saul replied, with one of his good-natured grins.

She sat silent for a time, musing. Never before had she been in a mining country, and everything interested her—pocketers coming into the little store at Canary Bend and exchanging gold dust for groceries in a matter-of-fact way; heavily shod men talking of claims and pockets and gold deposits; the general, good-natured simplicity of the people, and, particularly, now, this man who sat beside her and looked upon his coming difficulty with the dredger company with a grin. But for some reason or other she believed that his grin was deceptive. It might have disarmed a woman less familiar with humanity than young Doctor Chalmette. She imagined that it did not disarm Frank Epney, superintendent for the dredger company.

"You don't like to kill animals," she reminded him at last. "But you like to hurt men. Is that it?"

His face clouded. "What are you doin'?" he asked. "Making a study of the natives up here?"

Doctor Chalmette would have blushed guiltily had she been a woman with less command of her emotions.

"Yes," she answered frankly. "I'm always studying people, wherever I am. I'm not used to a man who doesn't like to kill and who, at the same time, threatens to hurt another man."

"I'm refreshin', eh? Well, as I told you, doctor, mountain lions don't bother me any, so I don't bother them. Ep has bothered me, and I'm goin' to bother him some if he does it again. There's no other law up here."

"I have heard that Mr. Epney has troubles already," she returned. "What about the Pinktop Mountain gang?"

"Still workin', I guess," was Saul's reply. "They've got the amalgam messenger from the dredger twice now. Once they cleaned him for seven thousand two hundred dollars' worth; next time for eight thousand and ten. They're a bad outfit, I guess, and have made a couple of neat little nicks in the company's profits. Just the same, I didn't

have anything to do with the holdups; they hadn't ought to take it out on me."

"Of course not. I didn't mean that. Do you know any of the Pinktop Mountain gang, Mr. Scanlon?"

He laughed boyishly. "That's what you might call a naïve question," he said, "if you'll permit a word that I don't ue very often. If I knew any of 'em, I don't guess I'd be tellin' about it. They never bothered me."

"You never molest anybody, then, unless he molests you?"

"I consider that a fairly good rule of conduct, ma'am."

"But if you knew any member of the Pinktop gang, and knew him to be guilty of highway robbery, wouldn't you hale him before a court of justice?"

"I'm not an officer of the law, doctor. Men get paid to do things like that. I get paid, I've found, for mindin' my own business. I may not know the circumstances, you see. Maybe the highwayman had to pull off that holdup in order to get justice for himself. I've seen a lot of court proceedings. Seems to me the fella that's got the dough mostly wins. So, as I'm not monkeyin' with other people's affairs, I don't know but maybe the fella thought he had to do that trick to get what was comin' to him. I don't just care for this line of conversation, if you'll pardon me, ma'am."

She laughed in a little confusion and rose to her feet. "And I suppose you consider yourself a good citizen, do you?"

"I've never thought much about that," he confessed. "Up here in the hills citizenship doesn't worry us much. We get our gold out of the river bed and pay our bills with it, treat our fellow men right as long as they treat us right, and watch the river flowin' by. And when we have to fight, we fight. The rest o' the time, I, personally, enjoy listenin' to the birds and huntin' for bee trees in the hills and readin' a book or two. Citizenship doesn't worry me at all. I suppose, ma'am," he broke off abruptly, "that you're keen for a career."

She looked at him, strangely amused. He was looking her over from head to feet, and seemed pleased with her. Doctor Shirley Chalmette was by no means homely. She was youthful and strong and in perfect health, and, though she perhaps did not realize it, was decidedly an attractive woman.

"Why, yes," she told him, "I suppose I am. I'm deeply interested in my work, if that's what you mean."

"Then I guess you'll never marry," he suggested, and his look of admiration caused her eyelids to shield her big blue eyes.

"I don't think about such things," she told him in a low tone. "Why do you talk that way?"

"I was just thinkin'," he replied, "that you'd make some real man a whoppin' wife."

As a usual thing Doctor Shirley Chalmette could talk about love and marriage and any other relation between the sexes in a dispassionate, scientific manner; but now, for the first time in years, perhaps, she knew that she was blushing.

"I'm not so 'woppin' big," she found courage to flash at him.

"Big enough physically," he opined, "and right big mentally. I'll bet, if I have the pleasure of seein' much of you, ma'am, I'll get to liking you a lot."

She tried to get angry, but could not. There was nothing unduly familiar in his attitude. She knew that she had been tendered a sincere compliment in a simple, straightforward way. And she was blushing still. But she could not find words with which to censure him.

"You don't mince words at all, do you?" she said at last. "And I—I thank you for—for what you said, because I believe you mean it. But forget it. As you say, I have settled upon a career.

Marriage is not for me. At least, I couldn't marry a man like you"—and here her face became hot again—"who chooses to live away from civilization the way you do. My work calls for life in a city, though I can't say that I don't love the outdoors. So don't let yourself become interested in me, Mr. Scanlon."

She had not said at all what she had wanted to say. It sounded biggoted, as if she were jumping to the conclusion that if, given the opportunity, he would make love to her.

But Saul did not seem to consider her egotistical in the least. "Women have changed their minds," he told her. "Might I call on you some time while you're in Canary Bend?"

"I'd be delighted to have you," she said truthfully. "I'm living in Nick Gibson's cottage, back of the store."

"I know. That's the only place you could be livin' in. I'll drift up soon."

"Good-by, then," she said, and offered her hand. "Thanks for delivering me from the lion's den and a watery grave."

He showed her his trail to the highway, which followed a contour of the hills far above the river, and she strode up it springily and disappeared in the chaparral.

Two days later news came to Canary Bend concerning a third holdup of the dredger company's messenger, on his secret way from the river to the nearest banking town, with twelve hundred dollars in gold amalgam. Two more of the dredger men had trailed him in an effort to protect him and the company's property. They had been too slow, and had rushed upon the scene as the bandits, all masked, were galloping off. They had opened fire on them, and one of the bandits had been seen to reel in his saddle. But he was held in his seat by two of his mates, and the entire band of seven had escaped. The dredger man who claimed to have hit the bandit with his second shot thought that the bullet had struck him in the back of the head. The superintendent of the company, having had a "hunch" that a holdup was about to be perpetrated, had sent out only a small quantity of the weekly clean-up of the dredger.

All of this was transferred to Doctor Shirley, as she liked to be called, by Nicholas Gibson, postmaster and storekeeper at Canary Bend. Nick was an owl-eyed man who was inordinately proud of a set of immense Alkali Ike mustachios, fully eight inches in length. He was a tireless talker, and would take half a teaspoonful of sugar from the scoop to make the scales balance exactly.

That evening Doctor Shirley Chalmette had a caller. He was Mr. Frank Epney, superintendent for the dredger company. Mr. Epney, he informed her, had come up to Canary Bend for the dredger men's mail and a few supplies, and to tell her, if she cared to hear, about the holdup. Incidentally he let slip the secret that he was unmarried. He was not the first man in Canary Bend to let out the same dread secret, and in this they seemed to hope that the young woman would be deeply interested.

They sat on the doctor's little porch, covered by morning-glory vines, and watched the dying sunlight on the distant, snow-capped mountains.

"We'll get 'em yet," boasted Epney. "I know who they are—every one of 'em, doctor. But we can't prove it. They're called the Pinktop Mountain gang, or the Pinktop gang, because they hang out in some undiscovered fastnesses of a high mountain of that name. But they all live about here. Most of 'em are cow-punchers over in the Poison Oak country beyond the river. They don't come here to trade. But there are others that live closer, and you may be brushing shoulders with them nearly every day."

"How interesting!" enthused the doctor.

"Listen," he said, lured into recklessness by the beauty of the girl beside him. "Here's a few names that you might remember I mentioned, after you hear that we've landed the gang. Now don't tell a single soul that I told you, will you?"

She promised faithfully, wondering a little triumphantly at her power over these big outdoor men. In San Francisco men treated her courteously and politely, but never gallantly. Up here she was a queen. She rather liked it for a change.

"Al Turin," began Epney, "Connie Malone, Dan Levert, Ed Drath, Benedict Gore, and Sam Finn. Heard any of those names since you've been here, Doctor Shirley?"

"One or two," she replied thoughtfully. "I think I've seen Allan Turin. But you named only six. There were seven of them to-day, weren't there?"

"Yes, seven were reported. I can't name the seventh just now. And, mind you, I'm not saying that the six I mentioned compose the greater part of the gang. I wouldn't accuse any one of 'em of belonging to the Pinktops. But"—and he winked craftily—"just try to recall those names when the gang is rounded up."

"The name Benedict Gore is frightfully interesting," she said. "I'll bet he's an adorable villain, Mr. Epney!"

Frank Epney's look of doubt showed that he did not consider any villain adorable.

"Ben Gore *is* a bad hombre," he said. "He's from the other side. Roustabout cowman, working from ranch to ranch when the spirit moves him, loafing when it doesn't. He's known to be a gunman and mean as sin. Most of the people who know him are afraid of him. One of these bullying, shoving, chip-on-the-shoulder sort of birds that somehow manage to keep from getting shot."

"I wonder who the seventh man is," she mused.

"Quien sabe," Epney shrugged. "He's a mystery even to me." And Epney's tone conveyed the suggestion that very few things in this mysterious world were mystifying to him.

"Who do you think is the leader?" she asked.

"Ben Gore, I guess."

"I'm glad of that. I'm getting wild about Ben Gore. I wanted him to be the leader."

Epney looked at her curiously. He could not quite make her out.

"Did any of the men you named own placer claims on the Falcon River that were worked by the dredger company?" she asked with disarming innocence.

He changed position slightly. "Levert and Drath did," he replied. "Why did you ask that?"

"Oh, I've heard that some of these placer miners were dissatisfied with their shares," she told him. "I just thought maybe some of them might be sore and were taking this method of getting what they think is rightfully theirs."

"They're all a bunch of fools!" Epney railed loudly. "A pack of fools. They'd never get any gold out if it weren't for us. That river's been worked for placer gold since the days of 'forty-nine. Everything loose has been pried out. We go down into the bed rock and get what they can't touch, and they think we're not entitled to something for our work and our big investment."

"I doubt if any of them think that way," she said. "But when they're promised a certain per cent they're entitled to it, aren't they?"

"You've been listening to the squawking of some sorehead, doctor," he accused. "And I'll bet I can name him. Saul Scanlon, that's who. Scanlon got all that was coming to him. The claim that we worked for him was one of the poorest we've struck so far. And you've heard, no doubt, that he's gonta

do something desperate if he doesn't get rich on claim number two. Well, I can attend to Mr. Scanlon's case. He'll get what's coming to him and not one cent more. We're losing money on this fork of the river, doctor, and that exclusive of the losses from holdups. I've had to lay off men that I couldn't spare to keep down expenses. Scanlon's a beefer—don't listen to him. We'll be with him next week, and then we'll see what he has to say. He says now that he'll get his if the first week's clean-up doesn't suit him. Well, I'll be on hand at the same old stand."

Doctor Shirley changed the subject for reasons of her own. "You say the bandits got only twelve hundred dollars this trip?"

"That's all. We played a trick on 'em. I had a hunch, you see. To-morrow night my man's going to sneak out with the rest of last week's clean-up." He lowered his voice. "Twelve thousand and eighty dollars' worth," he confided. "Don't tell anybody. And my messenger will be better protected this time. I'm going to lay a neat little trap for them."

He rose to his feet. "I must be hitting the trail for the river," he stated. "It's been a pleasure to talk with a woman of your intelligence, Doctor Shirley. I'd like to take you down to the dredge some day and show you how we do it. It's a treat to talk with you. We don't see many women of your caliber up here in the hills. Good night."

Doctor Shirley Chalmette went into her little house and lighted the smelly coal-oil lamp. "A pleasure to talk with me!" she laughed. "Most men do get pleasure out of saying, 'I, I, I,' from one end of their conversation to the other."

She pulled down the cracked window shades, undressed, and crawled into her hard little bed. She had been on a long walk through the pine forests that day, and she dropped immediately to sleep.

She awoke some time in the middle of the night, sick and nauseated, with a strange motion swaying her body from side to side.

It was several minutes before her dulled senses told her that she was tied in a saddle and held on a horse's back by two pairs of hands, one on either side of her. The horse was bearing her at a rapid walk through deep chaparral, upon which the moon showered its ghostly light. Ahead of her rode a mounted man, and she heard the click of hoofs behind her. The two men who held her in the saddle were walking beside her horse, for the trail through the chaparral was too narrow for three horses to travel abreast. She wore a man's long overcoat over her pajamas, and her felt slippers had considerately been thrust upon her feet.

"Well," complacently thought Doctor Shirley Chalmette, "I guess maybe I've been chloroformed and kidnaped by the Pinktop Mountain gang. Maybe this is going to be good."

Then she rested her chin on her hand once more and slipped into the strange dreams that chloroform brings on.

CHAPTER III.

UNMASKED.

AGAIN and again Shirley awoke, only to lapse into deep sleep or semi-consciousness. She could not seem to shake off her stupor. When she was half awake she was aware that the horse under her was continually forging on, and sometimes she was conscious of deep forests and torrential streams. The sweeps of chaparral, she believed, were far behind them.

It must have been early in the morning before she finally shook off her stupor and remained entirely cognizant of what was going on about her. The sky was still dark; there were no evidences of coming day. The moon was waning, but its light still filtered in

through the treetops and revealed the nature of the country through which they were traveling.

All about were large trees and gigantic stones. The ground was unobstructed by undergrowth, and the horses made rapid progress. The men riding ahead of the doctor were dimly outlined in the shadows of the woods. Always, it seemed, the horse that she rode was struggling upward.

Of a sudden the cavalcade came to a halt.

"At last," said a man in a low tone. "Ease her nibs down, Ed, and we'll give her a better place to sleep it off."

Shirley made no protest as two men gently lifted her to the ground, where they supported her while they removed the cloth binding that had held her wrists together. Then she surprised them by asking sweetly: "Did you bring my clothes along? I don't care to go around in my pajamas, ordinarily, unless I am at home alone. And it's cold. My ankles are cold."

"Well, great guns!" ejaculated a voice, and the owner of it quickly drew across his nose the mask which he had allowed to sag. "So you've come to, eh, miss?"

"Yes, I've come to," she replied evenly. "Have you my colthes?"

"Sure thing, miss. We're gentlemen, all of us."

"Get a lantern, Dan," said another voice.

"Cut out callin' me Dan," came the significant retort.

There followed a great deal of moving about in the darkness, the stamping of tired, hungry horses, and low-voiced conversation. Shirley stood waiting patiently for whatever was to happen, more curious, perhaps, than afraid.

Finally a man approached her, a lantern bobbing in his hand.

"If yuh wanta sleep some more," he offered, "come with me, miss. But if yuh're all right now, an' are able to do what yuh was brought here for, please say so and le's get at it. They ain't any time to lose."

"What do you want me to do?" she questioned. "I'm not feeling very well, but, if it's in my line, I'd rather do something than to stick here in the dark. I have decided that you want my services as a physician. Is that correct?"

"Yes, ma'am," she was told. "Yuh was the nearest doctor and the easiest one to get at. So we just—now—borrowed yuh. We want to bring a man to that's been dead on his feet since this mornin'."

"The outlaw who was shot in the holdup?"

"How'd yuh know that?" was the surprised question.

"Humph!" sniffed Shirley. "Lead me to him and we'll see what we can do. Is he in a coma?"

"In a which?"

"Knocked out?"

"Yeah—that's it. He's plumb ruint, ma'am. Can't come out of it. Somethin' mighty funny. Jest—jest in a kind of a dope all the time."

"Well, give me my clothes and show me where I can dress. Then lead me to him. I hope you had sense enough to bring along my medicine case."

"Sure we did."

"All right. Shoot the piece."

The man chuckled at her slang and her breezy manner of accepting the situation. He had entirely reversed his conception of the lady doctor from the city that he had heard about.

He walked ahead of her, swinging the lantern. The others were off in the dark trees, attending to the horses. He led her into a little two-room cabin lined with newspapers, and set the lantern on a homemade table.

In the plain little room, besides the table, were a single cot, a chair, her clothes, and her medicine case.

"He's in the next room," said the

masked man, as she entered. "Jest go right in when yuh're ready, miss."

"Call me doctor, please," she admonished. "And take off that silly mask."

And with an unexpected movement she threw up a hand and pulled the black handkerchief down to his neck.

"Here! What're yuh doin'? Cut that out!" he blustered.

"What's the matter? Am I not acting according to the rules? I don't like to deal with people when I can see nothing of their faces but their eyes. Who are you, anyway? You're not Al Turin, for I've seen him. Are you Connie Malone, or Dan Levert, or Ed Drath, or Sam Finn?"

"Why—why, Miss—Miss Doctor, I am——"

"I know you're not Benedict Gore. I have Ben's picture in my mind, and if he doesn't come up to my expectations I'm off him for life. Who are you, I say?"

"Why—why, doctor, yuh hadn't oughta act this way. Yuh're a prisoner. Don't yuh know that?"

"Oh, am I? I was beginning to suspect as much. Well, Connie or Dan or Ed or Sam, get out of here while I dress."

"All right, ma'am," the man responded meekly. "But I wouldn't do that—pullin' off a fella's mask—if I was yuh."

"You're not I, though," said the girl, and closed the door on him.

While she was dressing she heard men entering the other room. They were laughing in low tones a great deal, and she surmised that the unmasked bandit was telling the others of his experience with the "lady doctor." With her comb, which they had thoughtfully brought along, she rearranged her blond hair, picked up her medicine case, and opened the door in the partition through which the laughing came.

Instantly, as she stepped through, the laughter ceased.

A quick survey of the room, as she stood in the doorway, showed her more furniture than in the room that she had left. There were a cook stove, a large table, several chairs, and as many narrow bunks lined up along the walls. In one of them lay a man with a handkerchief mask across the bridge of his nose. Three other men occupied the room, all likewise masked.

The eyes of two of them followed her with deepest interest as she crossed lightly to the cot. The third man had sprung to his feet and hurried ahead of her to the prone figure. He took up a position at the head of the cot, ready, she thought, to prevent her from stripping the mask from the face of the silent patient.

"Don't get funny, miss," he warned as she stopped beside him. "Leave that mask where she is."

"Pooh! I can't do anything for him with that handkerchief over his face."

"You just naturally got to, doctor."

"Is that so! And what medical institution were you graduated from, Ed?"

"My name ain't Ed."

"Sam, then."

"Ahem! It ain't Sam, either."

"Why the 'ahem,' then? Take off that mask, Sam, so I can have a look at Ben Gore's face."

The man turned and gazed at the others with a bewildered, can-you-beat-that expression in his eyes.

"Aw, take it off, Sam," said one of his friends. "She's been wised up some way. What's the use? I guess she can't do much unless she c'n get at him." He lifted his voice and spoke direct to Shirley. "There's one thing certain, though," he said. "This'll make you a prisoner for some little time, Miss Doctor Lady. You will have it that way, an' you got to take the consequences."

"Shoot!" the girl defied them. "I'm not afraid of you. You all look like a bunch of big boobs to me. All except

Ben Gore. I like his forehead and close curly hair. Let me see the rest of his face, Sam."

Sam shrugged his shoulders and removed the mask. The kidnaped doctor looked down speculatively at the face revealed.

"What a villainous mug!" she murmured. "I don't know whether I'll bring him out of it or not. He's more dangerous than the rest of you."

The men chuckled, and Shirley took a long breath as silently as possible. The strain was beginning to tell on her. She really was frightened, but she was not going to let them know it if it could be prevented. She felt safer in badgering them, but she was on her guard.

"What lit on this jehu?" she asked flippantly.

"You guessed it the first time, ma'am," she was told. "A dead bullet nipped him this mornin'. We think it hit the limb of a tree first, then glanced off and cracked 'im in the back o' the noodle. It didn't even break the skin, but he went out immediately and ain't come to fully since. The skin ain't even broke—jest a kind of a soft place where the lead hit 'im."

"He'd have to come to in time, I think," she said. "There was no need to steal me and bring me here."

"You don't savvy what 'in time' means," retorted the speaker. "Your time maybe ain't our time. We want 'im on his feet by to-night."

"I see. When the rest of the dredger gold goes out, eh? This fellow Gore is the brains and courage of your gang, and you can't put on your little performance without him."

Shuffling feet, but no words, showed her that her shot had hit the mark.

"Well, we'll try to accommodate you," said Shirley. "My duty as a physician demands that I bring this man to his senses if I can. Whether he's an outlaw or not has nothing to do with the case. Got any whisky?"

After a short wait: "We got some moonshine, miss."

"Rectified?"

"Yeah."

"That'll do."

She leaned over and began loosening the patient's clothes. "Get some cold water," she ordered, as she lifted the head for an examination of the medulla oblongata.

"Some crack!" she announced. "Has he been out all day?"

"Yes'm—sometimes clean asleep, and then jest dopy like he'd been on a two weeks' jag."

She produced camphor and held it under the victim's nose for a little, taking it away again, and immediately holding it to his nostrils once more.

"Open the window," she commanded. "The door, too. Give him plenty of fresh air. It's like a hothouse in here. You ought to know better than that. Here, you, Sam, bring that water here. Get me a clean towel, if you have one."

The man who had entered with a bucket of cold mountain water was not the one whom she had sent for it. He stepped with it to the side of the cot, and turned away for a towel.

"Dip it in the water," ordered the doctor.

And as he stooped to obey her she reached out and jerked the mask from his face.

Her blue eyes widened as they looked with recognition into the surprised brown eyes of Saul Scanlon, the placer miner of the little cabin in the bend of the Falcon River.

CHAPTER IV.

PINKTOP MOUNTAIN.

IN a moment or two Doctor Shirley Chalmette had regained control of herself. She switched her glance from the apologetic eyes of the placer miner and bent again over her patient. Something pained her. She was angry at

herself for having jerked off Scanlon's mask.

Well, anyway, bandit or no bandit, she knew now that she had a friend in court. Saul Scanlon might be an outlaw, and there was now no doubt in her mind that he was, but she believed that he would stand by her if trouble came.

She had given no intimation that she recognized him beyond the spontaneous widening of her eyes when the mask fell down. But he knew, of course, that she had not been deceived. Did the other outlaws know it? She glanced at them one at a time, but their faces showed no sign of any new emotion, and she believed that they had not seen the exchange of looks between her and Saul.

Saul was now standing erect, and had not pulled the mask back in place. To do so would seem foolish. He held the dripping towel. In a low voice, from which she tried valiantly to keep signs of emotion, she told him to wring it out and place it on the patient's forehead.

Then she took a seat by the side of the cot and continued intermittently to hold the camphor to the man's nostrils and draw it away again.

She turned to Scanlon, standing there and watching her moodily.

"Put some water on the stove," she said, "and make some strong tea. I think he'll be coming out of it soon, for the camphor is choking him now and then. He'll need a hot drink when he's conscious."

The miner bowed silently and stepped toward the stove.

The other men began to stretch and show signs of weariness. One by one they climbed on the cots and pulled blankets over them. Scanlon sat beside the stove and watched the tea kettle, oblivious to the old proverb that the watched kettle will never boil.

An hour passed, with Shirley continually administering the strong camphor and replacing the water-cooled towel on Gore's head. He choked several times, and finally he sneezed. Shirley looked at Scanlon.

"He's responding," she said quietly. "Have your hot tea ready. And have ready, also, plenty of blankets. He'll probably have a chill. We'll wrap him up and help him close to the stove. Got that booze?"

"I'll get it," he said, and went outdoors.

Benedict Gore sneezed several times more, and after each brief spasm showed restlessness. Finally he opened his eyes wide and stared up at the girl. He closed them again, and a look of pain crossed his face.

"Come here," Shirley said to Scanlon. "Lift him up by the shoulders. Don't touch the back of his head."

Scanlon obeyed, and Ben Gore's eyes opened again as his body was lifted erect, like the eyes of a mechanical doll that wakes when lifted up and sleeps when laid in a prone position.

Gore ran his tongue over his thick lips and stared at Scanlon. He shivered, and his teeth began to chatter.

"He-he-hello, Scanlon," came from between his clicking teeth. "Who in thunder's th-th-this?"

"Doctor," replied Saul shortly. "Shall I give him the tea?" Momentarily he let his glance rest on Shirley's face.

"Yes. Here, Ben, drink this tea. Hold it to his lips, Saul."

"Hu-hu-how comes it you know me, miss?" stuttered the patient.

"Oh, never mind. You don't expect me to call you big, overgrown boys mister, do you? Drink it, I say!"

Sip at a time, the outlaw gulped down the steaming tea. He ceased, to remark: "I wanta know what in the devil happened to me and why this girl's here."

"Shut up!" barked out Scanlon. "Drink your tea and keep your mouth shut. You got soaked in the back of the head with a flattened bullet. This lady is a doctor. We got her to bring you out of it. You've been no more

than a quarter conscious since nine o'clock yesterday morning."

"Huh! What time's it now, Saul?"

The miner looked at his watch. "Half past four in the morning," he said. "Forget it and drink your tea."

"I'm freezin'," whined Gore. "Ain't you got a shot?"

"Yes, you'll get a shot," Shirley told him. "A small one every fifteen minutes."

"Th-th-that'd be all right if you mean fu-fu-fur the rest o' my life, ma'am."

"Only until you're fully recovered," she said firmly. "Give him about three quarters of an ounce now, Saul."

"Three quarters of an ounce! Th-th-that's only a t-t-teaser!"

"You'll get three quarters of an ounce now, and half an ounce every fifteen minutes until you're on your feet," she ruled. "That's that, old-timer! I'm boss until you're moving around."

Benedict Gore grinned. Had it not been so difficult for him to talk he might have continued the argument for the sake of hearing this blond girl boss him. He seemed to like it.

He got his first drink, finished his cup of tea, and immediately looked brighter. Thereupon Shirley and Saul wrapped the blankets around him, helped him up, and steadied him to a chair beside the glowing stove. Shirley sat beside him and massaged his wrists and the muscles of his neck. Indisputably he liked this, and laid his head back and closed his eyes.

There came a voice from one of the bunks: "Glad yuh got soaked, ain't yuh, Ben?"

Shirley leveled her big blue eyes at the speaker. "That'll be about enough from you, old-timer," she said crisply, and the man chuckled as if she had told him he was handsome.

Presently a lusty snore confirmed the fact that Benedict Gore had gone to sleep.

"That's good," the doctor announced. "This is a natural sleep. We'll let him lie. I'm going outside for some fresh air. You may come with me, Mr. Scanlon."

"You called me Saul a minute or two ago," he reminded her.

"You may come with me, Mr. Scanlon," she repeated.

Snorts of appreciation came from the bunks against the walls.

The girl stepped out, and Saul followed her, softly closing the door behind him.

Shirley walked through the pines to some distance from the cabin, Saul following. The air was sweet with the coming dawn. The girl knew that she was at quite an altitude by the freshness of the atmosphere and the feeling of exhilaration which one with a strong heart experiences on first entering a high elevation in the mountains. She came to a stop and leaned against a lofty pine, waiting for him to come up to her.

"Well?" she said, as he arrived.

"Well?" he repeated.

Then silence fell between them.

"So you're a member of the Pinktop gang," she said at last.

"Looks that way, doesn't it, Shirley?"

"Doctor, please."

"You called me Saul," was his defense.

"Yes, I did. I don't know why I did. I guess I must have been excited."

"Shucks!" he exclaimed laughingly. "You excited! Tell it to the marines!"

"Was it you who suggested kidnaping me?" she asked.

"No. I didn't know it was to be done. I didn't know anything about it till I rode up to the cabin, shortly after they'd brought you here."

"Am I to believe that?"

He shrugged his broad shoulders. "That's up to you," he told her. "Why not believe it? If I had admitted that I suggested it to the gang, you wouldn't think any the less of me than you do because I'm a member of the gang."

"That's logical," she replied. "So I'll believe you. And now what about me? When am I to be taken back?"

"That, I guess, is for Ben Gore to say, when he gets to saying anything again. You made a great mistake, Shirley, in pulling off the masks. They'll have to hold you now until to-night's business is over."

"And how dare they release me then?"

"The game is about played out," he explained. "To-day they had a couple of flankers travelin' with the amalgam messenger. To-night they'll have more. And if the gang makes good to-night and gets away with the stuff, they'll have a regular army next time. So to-night's raid will be the last. The gang is pretty well heeled with money now, and they're going to leave the country. There are other dredgers working in the West. They're goin' to vamose and seek new fields. You'll be turned loose after to-night, I guess, whether the gang wins or fails."

"All of the members of the gang are not here," she observed.

"How do you know so much? And where did you learn the names you mentioned to-night?"

"Oh, I was told by somebody who might compose the gang. I have a good memory for names. I was told six. But my informer didn't know the seventh outlaw. Now I know the names of all seven."

"I doubt it," he said with a smile.

"Meaning that 'Saul Scanlon' is an assumed name?"

"You're quick to catch an idea," he said, chuckling. "No, I'd say you don't know the name of the seventh outlaw—yet."

"Is this Pinktop Mountain we're on?"

"Yes. And we're in a rather unique hiding place. Come with me and I'll show you something."

He led the way through the pines for about fifty yards, and suddenly, through the trees, she saw the light sky ahead of them. The forest ceased abruptly, and she found herself standing above a precipice that swept down to a green river far below, winding in and out and extending into the fog-wrapped distances.

"That's the North Fork of the Falcon," he told her. "We're just above the headwaters. A posse'd have a hard time climbing that steep slope to get us, wouldn't they?"

She admitted it.

"Then back of us," he continued, "is a great ridge of rocks, and you came through it last night by way of a narrow gate, with two immense boulders on each side. The ridge extends in the shape of a horseshoe, and each end of it touches this precipice. The only way to get at us is through that natural gate. Seven men can hold off an army here, if their grub lasts. There's plenty of water; and there's grub enough to last for months."

"A beautiful view that is," she admitted, allowing her glance to coast down the almost perpendicular slope that fell over a thousand feet to the river. Beyond loomed higher mountains of the chain, and a cold sheet of fog hung horizontally in mid-air far below her.

"When your gang is in the penitentiary," she said, "I'm going to see if I can't get hold of this land and build a summer cottage here. How long have you been a member? I was told you've been in this country only about six months."

"That's right. And I haven't been a member of the Pinktop gang so very long."

"Just since the dredger people failed to give you as much as you thought was due you of the gold taken from your claim number one, eh?"

"Well, I admit I joined shortly after that."

"When you told me that you meant to 'hurt' Frank Epney," she said, "I thought you were going to do it in some-

thing of a wanly way. I didn't think you had resorted to such tactics as this to get your rights."

"I've found," he replied, "that the surest way to hurt some folks is to injure their pocketbook. A sore head gets well, but lost money doesn't often return."

"Where did you live before you came here?"

"Oh, south a ways."

"Just where?"

"Just south."

He was looking at her in an odd way, she thought, but of course she did not wonder at this. There was a hungering eagerness in his dark eyes, and his face was handsome as upon it played the first slim beams of a rising sun.

"We'll clean up to-night," he said. "With what we've already got, there'll be several thousand apiece for us. Then the Pinktop gang will be no more. They'll give us another name, I guess, before very long, in the country that we've picked on for our next series of hauls."

"And your conscience doesn't trouble you at all?"

He laughed in a strange way, she thought. "Conscience! Say, conscience is the last thing in the world to trouble me."

She turned from him sharply. "I'm going back to the cabin for a little sleep," she announced. "I'm dead on my feet. Call me when breakfast is ready. I'm hungry. I'll delegate you to give Ben Gore his doses of whisky. Don't give them any oftener than I prescribed, and don't increase the quantity."

CHAPTER V.

THE NAIL BY THE DOOR.

THERE was an outside door in each room of the cabin, and Shirley was able to enter the room to which she had first been taken without passing through the one that the gang occupied. She was very tired and sadly in need of sleep. She lay down on the hard bunk without undressing and pulled a blanket over her. But despite her tired condition, she found that sleep did not come to her at once.

She lay staring up at the ceiling, growing lighter and lighter as the sun climbed above the mountains. She could think of nothing but Saul Scanlon, and she hated herself for doing so. Why did she persist in being interested in this outlaw? Was it merely because he was big, strong, masculinely handsome, and soft of voice?

Sleep came suddenly, without the warning of gradual drowsiness, and she awoke several hours later, to find her breakfast, cold now, on the chair beside her bed.

She kicked off the covering and sat upon the edge of the bunk. And at that moment Benedict Gore entered unceremoniously and closed the door behind him.

"Why wasn't I awakened?" she challenged him.

"Saul said to let you sleep," replied the outlaw. "He said you was all wore out, and that it was a shame to wake you. Think that was right myself. You can eat now jest as well. I'll have this stuff warmed up again."

He went to work.

"How are you feeling?" she asked, her professional instinct coming to the fore in her mind.

"Oh, I'm right as a fox now."

She eyed him narrowly. "You increased the doses of whisky that I prescribed, I see."

"Yes, I was feelin' so rotten that I hit 'er up a little harder, after Saul left me. But that's nothin'. I always get half lit when there's any business to be done. Wanta come out and eat in the other room?"

"No, I'll have my breakfast here, thank you. What time is it, please?"

" 'Bout half past ten."

"I'd like to wash my face and hands," Shirley said, rising to her feet.

The outlaw stood with his back to the door. Suddenly she realized that his brow was low and creased and bumpy, and that his nose and chin were those of a man not far removed from his brutish ancestors. Instantly she was afraid of him.

"I've taken a great likin' to you," he announced suddenly. "Know what I'm gonta do? I'm gonta take you along when we leave this neck o' the woods."

"Oh, is that so?" said Shirley sarcastically. "And when did you arrive at that momentous conclusion, Mr. Gore?"

"When you was smoothin' my for'e'd," he answered. "And I seen you once at Canary Bend and took a likin' to you. You'll be treated right—don't worry. All you got to do is behave yourself."

"A very hard thing for me to do," she retorted. "I don't like to behave at all. Now just suppose you forget this foolishness and get me my breakfast."

Shirley was far from feeling the confidence that she displayed. She was afraid of this man, but she realized that to show her fear might be ruinous. Where was Scanlon? Had he deserted her?

Benedict Gore was chuckling at her remark. "I like you to talk like that," he said. "I like a woman with speret. Don't you think you could learn to love me?"

"Love you?" She threw back her head and laughed. "Say, you hate yourself, don't you? You've had too much to drink. Where do I wash my hands and face?"

She strode toward him, trembling in spite of herself. If her bluff failed to work, and he refused to move from the door, what could she do?

But with her blond head held high she continued toward him, as if she fully expected him to move and give her right of way. One step more and she would know whether her attempt at a high-handed, fearless attitude would cow him down.

He did not move from her path. She came to a stop close to him, and glared angrily at him.

"Will you please let me through that door?" she asked crisply. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you great big simp, to act like this, after I spent hours in doctoring you!"

"Come on," he gibed. "I thought you was goin' out to wash your hands an' face."

"Get out of my way!"

"Come on, why don't you?"

Shirley was beaten. Her face flamed crimson with embarrassment. She was proud and courageous, but she realized that she was afraid to take another step.

Then the door opened suddenly behind Ben Gore, and he was pushed forward toward her. She stepped back to avoid him. In came Saul Scanlon, and a great sigh of relief welled up in her breast.

"There's water and soap and a towel outside under the big pine," he said easily. "I didn't like to wake you, Shirley, even though you told me to when breakfast was ready. I thought the sleep would do you more good. Cook her something fresh, Ben. That stuff's stale."

He stood between the chief and the girl, and slowly one eyelid lowered itself as a signal for her to leave the room. Gore said nothing as she took two steps and reached the door, and then hastened out into the bright sunshine. The next moment Scanlon came swinging out of the cabin.

Shirley had reached the basin and towel under the pine. Scanlon was stalking her way, but not directly toward her. He passed her, twenty feet distant, and, keeping his head and eyes straight to the front, spoke to her as he came abreast.

"Look on the side of the cabin by the

door when you go in," he said out of one corner of his mouth. "Don't be afraid. I'll not be far away. Wash quickly and get back."

He strode on toward the woods and disappeared.

Quickly she dabbled her hands in the water and soothed her burning eyes with its coolness. She dried hands and face hurriedly and turned to walk back to the cabin.

As she neared the door she saw, hanging beside it on a nail, a small automatic pistol.

A single quick movement as she stepped upon the threshold and the pistol had left the nail and found its way into the right pocket of her khaki breeches.

Nonchalantly she entered to find Ben Gore sprawling over the table and making no move to provide her with fresh victuals.

He lifted his head and glared at her, then laid it on his arms again as she commenced the preparation of something for herself.

Gore lifted his head presently, then got slowly to his feet. Forking the frying bacon in a pan with her left hand, Shirley thrust her right into her pocket and gripped the little automatic. But Ben Gore only lurched to a corner of the room, where, from under a cot, he dragged a gallon demijohn. Returning with it to the table, he set it down with a bump and slumped into his seat again.

"Bring me a glass from that there cupboard," he ordered.

Shirley turned and stared at him. "Go chase yourself," she flung out, and swung back to her cooking.

With a drunken laugh, indicating that he greatly appreciated her bravery and independence, he himself went to the cupboard and returned with a half-washed jelly glass.

"Want a shot?" he asked.

"Thank you—no," said Shirley.

"You ain't afraid o' me, are you?"

"Not in a thousand years," she said, turning her cottage-fried potatoes with a spoon.

And from that, too, Benedict Gore derived much satisfaction, if his guttural chuckling stood for anything.

Shirley's mind was busy as she worked over the stove, casting an occasional wary glance in Gore's direction. The question that suddenly had come uppermost in her mind was: How did the bandits know that the remainder of last week's clean-up of the dredger was to be taken out that night? She had been told that ordinarily it went out during the daytime. The superintendent, Frank Epney, had told Shirley about it in a manner that had made her believe his revelation was confidential. But, she reasoned, if he had confided in her, was it not logical to think that he had told others? He seemed to like to talk. And doubtless the gang had spies at Canary Bend, who, if they did not actually belong to the gang, would report news to them.

She thrilled at thought of what Saul Scanlon had done to protect her. As an outlaw, of course, she did not approve of him, but she liked to believe that he was her friend in this predicament. But, then, after all, his motive was more or less selfish. He, too, she believed, imagined himself halfway in love with her. It was merely jealousy, perhaps, that caused him to defend her against Ben Gore.

Gore retained a moody silence at the table. He had taken two big drinks from the jelly glass since he brought it from the cupboard. Shirley knew nothing about his capacity, of course, but she knew that the day was yet young and that the outlaw chief was going pretty strong.

When there no longer was any excuse for her to hover over the stove, she decided to put on a bold front and carry her breafast to the table at which he sat. That was the logical place for her to

partake of her breakfast, of course, and she was afraid that he would think her cowardly if she chose some other place to eat. So she went to the cupboard and carried the necessary dishes to the table, then brought her food from the stove and complacently seated herself opposite the man. The weight that the automatic made in her side pocket emboldened her. She could use a gun. She had one just like it in her cottage at Canary Bend.

Gore roused himself as she took her seat. His eyes, she noticed in a surreptitious glance, showed none of the effects of the liquor that he had consumed. His drowsiness, perhaps, was the lingering result of his recent coma. He gazed across at her speculatively.

"Kid," he said presently, "I'm gettin' wild about you. Ain't one woman in a thousand that'd had the nerve to set down at this table with me, knowin' me to be an outlaw an' all."

"A woman in a thousand," repeated Shirley placidly. "That's not bad, is it?"

"No, not bad," he agreed. "And I don't want you to be scart o' me. I'm gentle as a lamb where a girl like you's concerned."

Shirley made no reply to this, but ate her breakfast daintily and watched him out of the corners of her eyes.

For some time he brooded. Then, suddenly: "Been thinkin' over what I said in there?"

"Not at all," she replied.

"What you thinkin' about, then?"

"I was thinking," she answered, "that I forgot to put on water to heat for washing these dishes. Do you mind attending to that for me?"

"I do," he retorted. "That's a woman's job, and if I got a wife she'll do such things for me, not me for her."

"Oh!"

She arose, filled the kettle from a bucket, and set it on the stove. As she took her seat again he rose from the table and started around to her. Quick as a flash she thrust her hand into her pocket and clutched the automatic. She jerked it out and gripped it in her lap, continuing to eat with her left hand.

He stopped beside her and looked down.

"What you need," he told her, "is breakin'. You're too flip and independent. Bein' a lady doctor and used to bossin' sick folks, I guess you've had things a little too much your own way. I'll take that outa you before very long. Now, get me straight; I ain't gonta be unnaturally cruel—jest firm. Women need bossin'. They ain't any good unless some man *is* bossin' 'em. And I'm the man to handle you. Now get me; you're goin' with me when to-night's business is over. I've picked you, and that ends that. What you got to say about it?"

"It seems that I have no voice in the matter at all," she declared. "But I wish you'd let me finish my breakfast in peace. I'm hungry."

"Gi'me a kiss," he said, "an' I'll let you alone till you're through. Come on, now—you might as well be gettin' used to it."

He waited for a response from her. She gripped the automatic in her lap and tried to steady her nerves.

"Gonta do it?"

"Decidedly not!"

"Then I'll help myself."

And as he leaned over swiftly she brought up the gun and jabbed it into his breast.

"Back off," she said in tones of determination that surprised her.

He glanced down over his chin, and his eyes widened at sight of the pistol. A spasm of rage crossed his face.

"Drop that!" he ordered sternly.

"You back away from me instantly!" she shot back. "If you are close enough to touch me by the time I've counted three, I'll pull the trigger. Do you hear? One—two——"

He backed away quickly; and then, taking such a desperate chance as only

the experienced gun fighter will dare, he leaped back toward her and grabbed the gun. A series of staccato reports reverberated in the cabin. Bullets tore holes in the shake roof above them.

Gore had imprisoned her wrist with his other hand, and, with slow, torturing movements, was twisting the weapon from her grasp. Her hand had gone numb. The weapon was his for the taking. But he pretended that only with great effort could he possess himself of it, and he bent back her hand at the wrist and twisted her fingers until she shrieked with pain.

"I said I'd break you!" he grinned triumphantly, plucking the pistol from her hand with ease, but continuing the torture. "Now how 'bout that little kiss?"

Her senses swam. Her face had gone deathly white. It seemed that her entire arm was being ground to pulp in some ruthless machine. He leaned over her; closer and closer came his face to hers, and she could not draw away. She closed her eyes and sobbed with pain and fright.

Then, suddenly, Gore straightened and cursed under his breath as there came three distinct knocks on the cabin door.

CHAPTER VI.

ANNE DRATH.

THE door opened after the triple knock. Benedict Gore ceased his torture and scowled malignantly. Shirley's senses swam back, and she saw that a dark, rather pretty girl had entered and now stood surveying the bandit with scorn written in her eyes and on her delicately molded lips.

"So you got anotner girl, have you, Ben?" she asked witheringly. "I didn't expect to find this when I come up here."

Gore looked foolish, and then there crossed his features a look that showed he was rallying to the defense.

"What're *you* talkin' about?" he bellowed angrily. "Think I'm gonta stand here and let this dame slip a flock of bullets into me?" He held up the automatic. "She had this shoved agin' my stomach," he continued. "But I was too smooth and got it away from her. You heard the shots, didn't you?"

"Yes, I heard 'em," replied the girl, stepping forward. "But why did she try to shoot you? That's what I wanta know. They must 'a' been some reason."

"They was," Gore assured her promptly. "I'd jest been tellin' her that we was gonta hold her until we saw fit to turn her loose. And she outs with this here gat an' shoves her agin' my ribs. I pretends I'm scared and backs away. And then I makes a dive an' gets it outa her hands. She pulled the trigger while I was fightin' for the gun. Look at the holes in them shakes in the roof."

The dark-eyed girl looked up and seemed convinced.

"An' you're sure you wasn't tryin' to make love to her, eh?"

"I wasn't, Anne!"

The girl shrugged her shapely shoulders and stared uncompromisingly at Shirley Chalmette.

"Well, maybe you're tellin' the truth, Ben—I don't know. But I'm tellin' you right now—if you think you want this jane more'n you want me, hop to it. I won't bother you any."

"Ferget it!" growlingly replied Gore. "I wouldn't be seen at a dog fight with her." His dark, threatening eyes rested on the doctor momentarily as he uttered this. The look said, plain as words: "Deny it and I'll torture you to death when I get the chance!"

"Well, I'm here," said the girl addressed as Anne. "Ed brought me up. We just got here. What d'you want o' me, Ben?"

"It wasn't me that sent fer you," Ben explained. "Ed an' Dan decided on that this mornin' while I was still

knocked out. This here jane begun jerkin' off masks, they said, and she proved that she knows us all by name. So she's gotta be held until we get ready to let her go. That's the way Dan an' Ed thought about it, and when I got on my feet I agreed that they was right in sendin' fer you. What you gotta do, Anne, is look out for her an' see she don't give us the slip while we're tendin' to that little business to-night. I'll need every man we got. They wasn't no one else but you to get to guard her nibs here. Can you handle her, d'you think?"

Anne turned cold, antagonistic black eyes on the doctor. "I'll tell the world I can," she said.

"Yes, I guess you can, all right." Gore turned to Shirley. "Finish your chow, now," he ordered, "and be prepared to watch your step after this. Monkey with Anne Drath and you'll get what's comin' to you."

He dropped the automatic into a side pocket of his canvas coat and once more seated himself at the table, where he poured out a two-ounce drink.

"Where'd you get the gat?" he asked suddenly, as if he had just remembered this important point. "Talk, now! No poutin' around goes with me!"

"It's mine," Shirley smoothly lied. "I had it in my pocket all along."

"Huh! Well, it ain't yours no longer. Eat your chow, I say!"

Shirley had lost her appetite, but felt it to be the part of wisdom to force down what food she could. She watched the dark-haired girl as she moved noiselessly and gracefully about the room, putting things to rights from the force of her feminine instincts.

"I never see such men!" she complained, removing a stack of unwashed dishes from the cupboard.

Presently she stepped to the side of Benedict Gore as he lifted another long drink to his lips. She placed one rounded bare arm about his thick neck, and with the other hand stroked his short, kinky hair.

"Don't take 'em so often, Ben," she begged. "You know you gotta have all your wits about you to-night."

"Don't worry," he said, patting her hand. "I know what I c'n handle, an' I know how much I need to be at my best."

"You do love me, don't you, Ben?" she purred, stooping to brush his forehead lightly with her lips.

"Course I do—you know it." And Gore looked at the doctor with a mixture of triumph and warning in his brown eyes.

He covered the girl's hand with his own immense, thick-fingered paw.

"Le' me tell you, ma'am," he said to Shirley, "this girl here, Anne Drath, is my sweetheart, an' she's everything in the world to me. She'll do anything for me. If I tell her to put the fixin's to you, she'll attend to that little thing. You've been actin' pretty smart around here since you come. You seem to think you're the guest of a bunch o' college boys. I wanta let you know you're up agin' it, an' you wanta watch your step. Be nice, now, an' take what's comin' to you like a little lady, an' you'll get out all right. Get funny an' you'll have cause to regret it. How 'bout Win Brady, Anne?"

He looked up at her, and it seemed to Shirley Chalmette that a peculiar light shone in the girl's dark eyes.

"We fixed him, all right," Anne murmured.

"I'll say we fixed him! Tell her nibs here what was done to Win Brady, Anne girl."

"Ben," she said, straight lipped, "I jest know you're drinkin' too much. You wouldn't be talkin' about a thing like that if you wasn't. Please lay off for an hour before you hoist another one, won't you, Ben?"

"You mind your own business!" he flared up. "Did you ever see me soused

when they was somethin' doin'? No, I'll say you didn't! Tell her what we done to Win Brady, I say! She needs to know."

"But I don't like to tell her, Ben. It don't look like the right thing to do. You never know what may happen."

"Tell her, I say!" boomed Benedict Gore. "I'm *orderin'* you to tell her, ain't I?"

Anne Drath's dark eyes looked straight at Shirley. "Win Brady was a member o' the Pinktop Mountain gang," she said. "He decided to quit. He was found dead in the woods, with a bullet jest under his heart. D'you understand?"

"I understand," replied Shirley obediently.

"Well, then," Ben Gore put in, "watch your step. Somethin' like that maybe'll happen to you if you get funny round here ag'in."

Shirley's mind was busy. It was evident that the outlaw chief was drunker than he thought. No sober man in his position would have made the girl reveal such a damaging episode. Anne had not wanted to tell, but Gore had forced her to.

The girl was speaking to her again, her dark eyes narrowed and harboring a tigerish look.

"An' maybe you wanta know who done it!" she challenged.

Shirley made no reply.

"Tell her, Ben," urged Anne Drath. "Tell her who done it! It'll do her good to know."

"Let her guess," chuckled Gore. "That'll do her more good."

Anne left him and went on righting the interior of the cabin.

Shirley continued to sit at the table, across from Gore, who winked at her and leered and tossed back his head in Anne's direction when the girl's back was turned.

Presently Saul Scanlon and two more of the gang entered. One of them, Shirley had previously decided, was Ed Drath, and now she supposed him to be the brother of Anne, Gore's deceived sweetheart. The three men talked in low tones with Gore a little. Then Gore nodded and followed them out, casting back at Anne as he left:

"Keep your eye on her. She may get the fool idee to beat it into the forest. She'd git lost an' starve to death, o' course, an' we'd have that on our conscience fer the rest of our lives." He grinned and closed the door behind him.

For perhaps five minutes there was no sound save those made by Anne as she bustled about the cabin, completely ignoring Shirley. Presently she stepped to the window in the same wall as the door, and stood looking out. Then she crossed to the other side of the room, straightened a pair of riding boots under one of the bunks, and stood gazing through the window on that side.

She turned and approached the table, gathering up the dishes that Shirley had used. She passed around to Shirley's side and bent over the table at her elbow. Then Shirley's heart took a couple of extra jumps, caused by surprise over the girl's guarded words that came through stiffened lips:

"Don't worry. I'm with you. Leave everything to me."

CHAPTER VII.

THE PACT.

WITH mixed emotions Doctor Shirley Chalmette watched her new ally, Anne Drath, as she bustled about in her work.

She was a darkly pretty girl, with masses of black hair piled upon her head; big, appealing black eyes, and a rather pathetic droop on her pretty lips. She was graceful as a fawn, and she wondered that a man like Benedict Gore should be untrue to her. That she was uneducated was quite apparent from her speech, but that fact should not have worried the bandit chief.

Not knowing what else to do, Shirley rose from the table and began helping the girl with the dishes.

"That's better," said Anne, moving close to her. "Maybe we can talk if we keep our voices down and don't move our lips any more than necessary. Can't tell who may be watchin'. I'll wash the dishes; you wipe them. Then we can stand close together. I'll watch through one window. You watch the other one."

They soon had the dishes in the water. There was a vast pile of them besides the ones that Shirley had soiled. They washed them on the kitchen table in a huge pan, standing one on either side of it. This gave each of them full command of one of the two windows of the room.

"What d'you think of me?" asked Anne Drath, her lips scarce moving as the words came out between her even white teeth.

"You gave me a pleasant surprise," admitted Shirley. "You're something of an actress. I never suspected until after Gore had gone and you stood beside me and told me. Does the gang trust you?"

"Well, so fur as I know. I've thought sometimes they were onto it that I ain't with 'em heart and soul. But I can't never make sure. I'm Ed Drath's sister."

"I thought so," said Shirley.

"Did Ben Gore make love to you?"

"Well——" Shirley hesitated.

"Don't be afraid to tell the truth. He's nothin' to me. I'm jest playin' 'im for a sucker."

"He tried to, then," the doctor admitted. "He started it some time ago, and Saul Scanlon slipped me the automatic. But I bungled, and Gore got it away from me."

"I thought as much. And he pretends to be in love with me! Well, he ain't foolin' me any more'n I'm foolin' him," and she laughed bitterly.

"Why do you pretend to be in league with them?" asked the doctor.

"I can't very well git out of it, fer one thing," was the reply. "My brother's all I got. Our folks are dead. I found out about a year ago that he belonged to the Pinktop gang, and he made me promise to keep still about it. A girl can't very well go back on her brother, can she?" Anne looked at Shirley appealingly.

"It's a difficult situation," said Shirley. "You have my sympathy."

"And I'm stickin' with 'em for another thing," Anne told her. "I'm tryin' to find out who killed Winfred Brady. I thought maybe Ben Gore was drunk enough jest now to say he done it, so I tried to make him cough it up. But he wouldn't step in the trap. He's wise. I know he done it, all right—that is, I know in my heart he did. But I gotta know fer sure. Then I'll fix 'im, and I won't hesitate even if Ed gets into trouble. I'll squawk regardless. I wanta see the man that killed Win Brady hang!" Her eyes were glowing and her brown cheeks were flushed.

"Who was Win Brady?" Shirley asked softly.

"He was my sweetheart," she confessed, lowering her black lashes. "He was jest a kid—about my age. Win he come here with Sam Finn from Texas. This gang has been doin' their dirty work in this country fer years—long before the dredge come up the river. They used to rob stores and box cars, and things like that.

"And Sam Finn he belonged to the gang, and then he went to Texas fer a time, 'cause they was gettin' onto him hereabouts fer cattle rustlin'. So Sam he stayed there about a year and then sneaked back, and when he come he brung Winfred Brady with 'im. And then Win he become a member o' the Pinktops.

"He was jest a kid, but he was as brave as any of 'em. He wanted to be a bad man—see? And this Sam Finn had met him down in Texas and told 'im

he'd give 'im a chanct. So that's how he got in the Pinktop Mountain gang.

"And then Win, he met me and liked me, and we—well—jest fell in love with each other, you know. And one night we got to talkin', over at my brother's ranch, where we live, an' I told 'im this outlaw stuff was the bunk and begged 'im to cut it out. He had a little money, and I said le's take it an' run away to San Francisco. We could git married there, I said, and he could git a job, and we'd be decent.

"He loved me so much he said we'd do it first chance we got to beat it. An' next day I found 'im in the woods, clost to our ranch, with a bullet through his lungs.

"I said to-day that he was found dead. That's what the gang thinks. But he was alive, and he told me that he knew one o' the gang had shot 'im, but didn't know who. He told me—well, never mind about that. I ain't got any right to tell it. I was told not to, and I gotta keep still. But he died, there in my arms, and afterward I found where some one had been standin' at the window of our ranch house an' listenin' to what Win and me'd been sayin' about leavin' the country. That's why they killed 'im—they was afraid he'd turn 'em up, once he'd got away. And ever since I been makin' out like I'm stuck on Ben Gore, jest to try an' find out who killed Win. But to this day I don't know. I'm still tryin', though. I'll find out some time."

"If they know that you were in love with this boy," asked Shirley, "how does it come that Benedict Gore seems to think that you now love him? Wouldn't he suspect that you are playing a game with him, knowing that Winfred was your sweetheart?"

"That's what I never could figger out," replied Anne Drath. "Maybe Ben is playin' me—I don't know. I savvied it was a resky game when I started it, but nothin's happened yet."

"And you don't think that Ben suspects?"

"He don't act that way. But I might find out somethin' I don't like if things come to a show-down. Be careful! I hear some one walkin' outside. Don't say anythin' fer a time."

For five minutes or more they worked in silence. The sound of footsteps near the door had long since ceased.

"Go ahead," said Anne. "I guess they've gone."

"Ben Gore has threatened to take me with him when his gang leaves the country to-night," Shirley told her.

"Jest gonta cast me one side like an ole shoe, eh?" Anne's dark eyes were flaming again. "Well, we'll see about that! Not throwin' me down—I don't mean that—but takin' you off agin' your wishes. I got somethin' to say about that, if they leave me to guard you. I'm heeled. I got a thirty-eight automatic hid clost by, under the roots of a tree. Believe me, I c'n use her, too!"

"Saul Scanlon seems to be my friend, also," Shirley said.

"I don't know much about him," Anne admitted. "He ain't been with the gang so very long. He's good lookin', though, ain't he? He looks too good to associate with this trash."

"I can't make him out," was the doctor's reply. "I like him, somehow or other, and I can't help it."

She felt that her face was turning color as she made the admission. She looked up guiltily, to find Anne's dark eyes fixed on her face intently.

"I guess he joined because he was sore at the dredger folks," she surmised. "They *are* a bunch o' robbers. Everybody knows that. And a man that's got a claim on the river that they work fer 'im ain't got the ghost of a chanct to git what's comin' to 'im. What c'n a fella do, if he's too much of a man to stand fer bein' robbed?"

Shirley was compelled to admit that

she had ready no answer to that question.

"I'll tell you what you an' me'll do," Anne suggested presently. "About two o'clock they'll be leavin' fer the holdup. They'll all go. Then I'll put up some grub fer you an' show you how to get outa the mountains. There's plenty o' water almost everywhere, and you can't go wrong as long as you don't lose sight o' the river. You may not get back to Canary Bend fer a day or two, but you'll make it in time if you do as I say. An' we'll see that you have plenty o' grub. You'd better take a blanket, too. It's cold in these mountains after dark."

"And what will they do to you when they come back and find out that you have let me escape?"

Anne Drath gave her characteristic shrug. "Don't much matter what they do to me," she said. "I been dead on my feet since they murdered Win. I don't care what happens to me."

"You mustn't look at life that way," Shirley reproached her. "Let's both go. We'll sneak into Canary Bend when we reach it, and take the first train for San Francisco. I'll help you to get a job at something in the city, and see that you want for nothing until you land one. Come, shake this bunch for good. Let your brother lead his own life. You lead yours."

Anne Drath shook her beautiful head. "I can't do it," she said. "I've took an oath to find out who killed Win Brady and take 'im into court to be tried fer murder. I can't go."

"Then I'll not go, either," Shirley determined stoutly. "I'm not going to take the risk of something dreadful happening to you because you allowed me to escape."

"Don't mind me. I'll——"

"I'll not move one step unless you go with me," Shirley interrupted.

Anne looked across the table at her and smiled. "I like you," she said. "You're like I am, a sticker, and not afraid. I c'n see they's no use to pester you. I guess we both stay and see her to the end. We'll stick together. We'll git by some way, doctor."

"We will," repeated Shirley.

"Sh!" whispered Anne apprehensively. "I hear some one at the door.

In came Benedict Gore and Saul Scanlon. Just inside, Gore spread his columnar legs and rested his fists on his hips.

"Now that," he observed to his companion, "is what you might call a nice little domestic scene, eh? Two han'some girls washin' an' wipin' dishes, an' gossipin' about this an' that an' the other thing, pleasant as can be. One a corn-tassel blonde an' the other'n a black-cat brunette. Take your choice, Saul."

"I'll take the blonde," said Saul Scanlon gravely; and Shirley's cheeks grew red, half with embarrassment, half with anger at this display of coarseness.

"We'll match fer 'em, Saul," suggested Benedict Gore. "C'mon over to the table."

They crossed to the two girls and took positions opposite each other, one at each of the vacant sides of the table.

Gore took a fifty-cent piece from his pocket. The two girls, with eyes downcast, continued their washing and drying.

"What's it to be?" asked the chief. "Le's say heads is Blondy; tails is Blacky." He chuckled gutturally, highly amused at himself. "I'm choosin' fer you, Saul. If she comes heads, you get the blonde. If she comes tails, you get brunette. What d'you say?"

"Suits me," answered Saul. "Shoot!"

Gore grinned from one girl to the other, shaking the coin in his big palms the while. Then suddenly he slapped it on the table and kept one hand over it.

He grinned at them again, and slowly lifted his hand.

"Heads she is," he announced. "You get the blonde, Saul. Help yourself."

And with unexpected swiftness Gore

leaped at Anne Drath and threw his arms about her, while in the same instant Scanlon likewise imprisoned Shirley.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WEDGE-SHAPED ROCK.

STUPEFIED, the two girls offered no resistance. Anne stared up into Gore's glinting eyes in absolute astonishment.

Gore spoke. "So you got a thirty-eight automatic clost by, have you?" he said sneeringly. "And you been playin' me fer a sucker, have you? And you wanta know who bumped Win Brady, do you? And the two of you're gonta stick and see this thing through, are you? And you're gonta get by some way, I understand."

He grinned malevolently from one girl to the other.

"Playin' *me* fer a sucker!" he gritter through his teeth. "Did you think, Anne, that I wasn't onto you some months ago? And you walked right up here in the mountains an' come in this here cabin' an' spilled your little story into Blondy's ear, didn't you? You didn't savvy you was walkin' into a trap. You didn't know that, since you was up here last, I had one o' the boys dig a little tunnel under the cabin, beginnin' at the back, fer jest such a little act as you put on a while ago, did you? Well, I did. An' Sam Finn's been layin' under there, with his ear to a crack in the floor, ever sence I went out with Scanlon.

"So now," he said, turning to Saul, "we got two beautiful prisoners instead o' one. But, as things've turned out, we ain't got nobody to watch 'em while we're away to-night. I guess we'll have to stall feed 'em till we get back, won't we, Saul?"

"Guess that's about it," agreed Scanlon.

"All right. Go ahead with the blonde. I think I ca'n handle this one here."

"If you ask me," said Scanlon quietly, "I'd say this is a foolish move, Ben."

"Why? What d'you mean?" the other responded angrily.

"You didn't have to let them know that their conversation has been overheard," replied the placer miner. "They wouldn't have run away. Didn't they agree to stick it out together? You would have found them here when we returned to-night. Then would be the proper time to let them know we were on to them."

"O' course! O' course!" sneeringly replied Gore. "Jest let 'em loaf around all day an' set pretty, eh? But I got a better scheme. It won't be so much fun fer 'em to be shut up the rest o' the day. That begins to get uncomfortable along late in the afternoon, Saul. Don't you reckon I'm gonta get any fun outa torturin' 'em a little?"

"Oh, if that's the way you feel about it——"

"It is. We gotta be hittin' the trail before so very long, and I wouldn't have much time to tease 'em. But this way I c'n go on about my business, happy in the knowledge that these two are gettin' theirs while I'm away, without any strain on me at all. Lead out—take 'em to our celebrated chamber of horrors."

"Come on," Saul gruffly ordered Shirley, "and don't try to start anything."

He took his arms from about her and with one hand grasped the upper part of her arm. Distinctly she felt his fingers grip it and release it three times, in an unmistakable signal. She saw his face flush and his teeth grip his lower lip as Benedict Gore hurled Anne Drath to the rough floor and started dragging her toward the door by the wrist. The fingers that held Shirley's arm trembled.

He and Shirley passed outside. Gore, still dragging Anne over the floor, now gave her a herculean swing and shot her out ahead of him. She crumpled up on the doorstep, and Gore dragged her to her feet.

"Treat 'em rough, Scanlon," he ordered. "It does 'em good."

"No," replied Scanlon, "cut out the rough stuff, Ben. It's childish. It gets you nowhere."

"That so!" he answered sarcastically. "I'll treat 'em rougher still when I get the time."

Anne, now on her feet again, was jerked and shoved along in the wake of the others. Scanlon led the way with Shirley through the trees, and a short distance from the cabin they came upon the saddled horses of the gang. Under each left-hand *rosadero* hung a Winchester in a scabbard. The other members of the gang, which now numbered seven, Shirley noticed, were sprawled on the ground near by and watched the proceedings in silence, grinning at one another. Doctor Shirley inferred that they were about ready to ride away on their grim errand of the night.

The two men and their prisoners passed on through the trees, low laughter following them. Scanlon bore to the right, and presently they entered a thinner portion of the forest, bright with sunlight. Ahead lay the horseshoe-shaped ridge of rocks that Scanlon had told Shirley about, and toward it he directed his steps.

They wound their way between great, grotesque rocks as large as houses of ordinary size, following a sort of trail. Shirley heard the crash of a mountain torrent beyond the ridge, and supposed that, somewhere over there, a stream poured in a cataract through the rocks. Suddenly, just beyond another sharp turn to the right, the girl found herself facing the black mouth of a cave.

It was a perpendicular mouth, about fifteen feet in height—a very narrow, upright opening between two flat-faced stones of gigantic dimensions. There was just room between them for Saul Scanlon to squeeze his big frame through. He went ahead, squirming along sidewise, and Shirley followed. She trusted him. With Gore behind her, she realized that there was nothing else to do.

Saul turned and faced her when they were well within the opening. "Quick," he whispered. "Open your mouth."

Obediently she did so, and into it his fingers thrust a square of folded paper. He pressed on immediately, and behind her the sunlight was shut off suddenly by the entrance of Anne, pushed ruthlessly between the rough rocks by Gore.

They entered a little natural chamber, made by a hollow place in the heaped-up stones. From a natural opening somewhere near the top the sunlight filtered in thinly. The odd-shaped room contained about sixty-five square feet of floor space, or the equivalent of a room about eight feet by eight. The floor, though of stone, was covered with soil that was slightly moist, and here and there over it were strewn small particles of driftwood—twigs and little, water-worn bits of bark and limbs of trees. The irregular opening over their heads was twenty feet, perhaps, above the floor. Toward it the great rocks that formed the walls of the cave sloped inward.

Gore thrust Anne Drath into the chamber.

"Well, here we all are," he chuckled. "Nice place, girls, where you c'n gossip to your hearts' content. Saul and me'll leave you here, an' later we'll visit you an' have a little talk. In the meantime we'll be pretty busy. C'mon, Saul."

Scanlon said nothing, neither to Gore nor to the girls. Gore pressed his way out between the gateway rocks, and Scanlon followed. For a time, as the men passed through the narrow crack, the sunlight was shut off, and then it shone through dimly once more as they reached the open.

Anne and Shirley looked at each other, not knowing what to do. They realized, however, that to try to do anything until the outlaw had left the vi-

cinity would be a waste of time. So far as either could see now, they had only to walk back through the crack after Gore and Scanlon had taken their leave, for there seemed no way for the men to close the narrow aperture.

The mind of each of them was filled with such thoughts when a great crash assailed their ears, and the light suddenly faded in the hall-like entrance. The ground shook slightly under their feet. A great wedge-shaped stone had been loosened above and shoved down into the crack, into which it fitted as if stonecutters had fashioned it for this purpose. Thin streams of sunlight showed on all sides of it, but no human being could crawl around or under or over that wedge-shaped obstruction.

"So that's it, is it?" Anne laughed bitterly. "I might have knowed there was a joker in it somewhere. Supposen they all git killed to-night—what'll become of us then?"

She looked upward at the jagged opening above. "One of us could stand on the other's shoulders," she said, "but she'd still be too low down to reach that hole. I guess they got us, doctor."

But Shirley had taken the note from her mouth and was holding it in the descending shaft of light. It read:

DEAR SHIRLEY: It can't be helped. He has told me what he is going to do, but I don't dare oppose him. I must pretend to agree with everything he does, provided he doesn't go too far. You are to be locked in a peculiar natural cave in the ridge of rocks. Above the narrow entrance to the cave lies a wedge-shaped rock, which will fit nicely into the opening. But it will require the entire gang to get it out again.

I have planned to set you free when the proper time comes. On the other side of the ridge flows a sizeable mountain stream. I have noticed that the floor of the cave is usually damp, and have seen particles of drift on it. So I know that when the creek rises its flows into the cave through the crevices. So, if you two can plaster up the crevices about the wedge-shaped rock, after it has been shoved into the creek, the water will rise and take you up with it so that you can reach the opening above. As a last resort I will throw a dam across the creek and divert the water into the rocks. I know you are a poor swimmer, but I can assure you that Anne can take care of herself and you, too. You can help her by holding to the jutting rocks as the flood rises, and she'll have little difficulty in keeping you afloat until you can crawl out through the hole.

Here's luck to you both! You'll know that I'm at work when the water begins pouring into the cave. If I get the opportunity before we leave for the holdup, I'll drop down some gunny sacks, which will help wonderfully in keeping the water in.

Devotedly, SAUL.

Anne had been gazing at Shirley in silence, waiting patiently for her explanation of the note that she was reading. Shirley looked up from the paper and smiled at her, and told her how Scanlon had slipped the note into her open mouth. Then she read it to her—all but "Devotedly, Saul."

CHAPTER IX.

A VOICE IN THE DARK.

AN hour or more had passed when, with startling suddenness, a bundle of sacks fell on the floor of the cave. Shirley looked them over in the hope that Scanlon had placed a note somewhere in the bundle, but she found nothing of that kind.

The imprisoned girls immediately set to work at making the cave water-tight. With their hands they scooped up the loose silt that covered the stones of the floor, and with it filled one sack after another. When a sack was nearly full they dragged it to the blocked entrance and settled it in some depression. When all of them had been so placed they mortared the crevices between the sacks with mud.

This work kept them occupied until the sun no longer sent its thin light down through the hole above. They could do no more toward making the cave hold water, so they settled down in the dark to rest and talk.

Hour after hour slipped by, with the only sounds the roaring of the waterfall and their own voices. They were growing hungry, and since night had descended their prison was cold and clammy. Time dragged heavily, and, as neither of them had a watch, they had no idea of how long they had been walled in by the grim rocks of the ridge.

Anne dropped asleep finally, and Shirley did not disturb her. She sat thinking of Saul Scanlon and the strange adventure into which she had been forced. The night wore on.

Then, quite suddenly, water splashed in her face and awoke her from a half dream. At her feet a stream of water, growing in volume, was pouring and spreading over the rocky floor. It had splashed Anne Drath, also, for Shirley heard her startled cry.

"He's turned the water in on us," Shirley announced. "Now comes the test. Oh, how I dread it!" She shuddered, recalling the black terror that had come over her when, a few days before, the placer miner had rescued her from the deep trout pool.

They stood together against one rocky wall, holding hands, while the water roared in. It was coming in a sizable stream now, and in a short time its level had risen above their ankles. It was terrifyingly cold, thought Shirley. She wondered if her limbs would cramp.

"Le's keep walkin' round while we can," Anne suggested. "Maybe that'll keep our blood in circulation."

So, still holding hands, they marched round and round the narrow inclosure, Anne guiding their progress by touching the walls.

The water rose to their knees, and they plowed their way through it with more difficulty. In a surprisingly short time it was up to their waists.

"Won't be long before we're swimmin'," Anne proclaimed. "And we'll be swimmin' a good long time, too, it looks like to me. But we can hold to the rocks and jest rest, maybe."

Up, up crept the chilling flood. It reached their armpits, and their feet seemed inclined to leave the floor and glide gently to the surface. They kept moving about, but with difficulty. The water reached their necks.

"Good-by, ole floor," said Anne. "We're gonta leave you now."

And in a minute more she was obliged to swim.

In preparation for this moment they had taken up positions against one of the walls, and now Anne guided her companion's hands to an outjutting rock above their heads.

"Hold onta that," she advised, "and keep kickin'. Not too hard—don't wear yourself all out. Jest keep in motion so's the cramps won't git you."

"What on earth are we to do if we do get out?" asked the doctor.

"I don't know," Anne replied. "That's up to Scanlon. It's mighty funny he couldn't get a rope and haul us out. But I guess maybe Ben was watchin' 'im. I've thought, at times, that Ben didn't trust Scanlon any too fur. I've seen 'im watchin' 'im funny-like when Scanlon didn't know it, as if he was tryin' to figger 'im out."

"It would take some time for him to haul us up with a rope," the doctor admitted. "And it may be possible that he would be seen from the cabin, if he were working up on top there."

"Not this time o' night," said Anne, as she felt over the rocks above her head for a new hand hold. "But all he'd have to do to throw a dam acrost that crick would be to drop in a few sacks filled with dirt. That wouldn't take two minutes, if his sacks was all ready. It's the savin' o' time that he's after. He don't dare be away from the gang any longer than he's got to."

Up, up the rising water bore them, Anne at times swimming and supporting her friend, at other times both holding

to jutting rocks that their feeling hands had discovered.

"We're pretty near the top," Anne announced at last. "I guess we'll make it, all right. Gettin' out worries me a little, but we won't fret about that till the time comes."

The time came sooner than the girl had expected. The narrow, necklike top of the cave filled much faster than had the lower portion. Shortly after Anne had spoken she reached up and grasped one of the stones that fashioned the opening.

With her other arm about the doctor, she waited patiently for the water to bear her a little higher.

"I'd better crawl out first so's I c'n reach back in and help you out better. I couldn't push you up, you know, but I could haul you up when I'm on the solid rocks."

"Perhaps you're right," Shirley replied.

"Then reach over here and feel these big rocks that are under water. Get 'em in both hands and hold on tight. I'll be climbin' out next minute."

She suited action to words.

Doctor Chalmette found the underwater protuberances and took a firm grasp on them. Then Anne released her, and a little later squirmed her lithe body through the hole.

"Now hold on while I run and jerk a sack or two outa the dam, so's the water'll not run in on you while you're gittin' through."

Three minutes passed, with Shirley holding on desperately, and then Anne was lying prone on the rocks above her and reaching down a hand to grasp her wrist.

But when she tried to reach down with the other hand she discovered that the feat was impossible because of the small size of the opening.

"I can't git but one arm in so's to reach you," she announced. "But I guess I c'n haul you up with one hand. Are you ready? Le's go!" And she began to lift with all her might.

Then suddenly the weight on her arm grew tremendous.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

"The—— I don't know," answered Shirley. "I seem to be sinking!"

"Git hold of a rock with your other hand," Anne advised. "Somethin's gone wrong, I'm afraid."

Indeed something had gone wrong. The dam of mud and mud-filled sacks below had at last given way under the increasing pressure of the water. Through the crack down there it was now rushing in a stream larger than the one which was pouring in, and in no time at all, it seemed, the water level had sunk to Shirley's knees. Then she knew that it was giving her no support at all, and she was hanging in mid-air, with the water ever receding below her. And her only means of hanging there was Anne's grip on her wrist and the jutting rock to which she clung.

"Oh, the water's running out through the big crack!" she panted. "It's—it's way below me now. My feet are out of it!"

"Hang on," Anne encouraged grimly. "Keep your head. I'll git you out. Rest a minute while I think."

But neither resting nor thinking solved the problem. It was utterly beyond the strength of the mountain girl to lift her companion with one hand. Time and time again she tried it, with Shirley aiding all she could. Anne had crowled out while the water was holding her up, but, now that Shirley was trying it, the support of the water had deserted her.

"Oh, what'll we do!" moaned Anne at last, herself beginning to give way to panic. "D'you think you could hang there if I was to let go o' you and git a stick or somethin'? Maybe you could hold to one end o' the stick and I could stand up and lift with both hands on the other end."

"I—I don't think I could hold out while you were hunting one," said Shirley and her voice held a tone of despair. "You'd—you'd better let me go. How far would I fall do you think?"

"Too far," was Anne's reply. "Too darned far. Twenty feet and more. You might be killed or break somethin'. No, I won't let go of you. I'll die right here holdin' your wrist."

These loyal words brought Doctor Shirley Chalmette's courage back to her.

"Now, listen, Anne," she said in firmer tones, "you'll do nothing of the kind. Don't be foolish. Let go of my wrist. I'll hang to the rock as long as I can, then drop. I know how to light. There's soft mud down there. You go and try to find Scanlon."

"Nope! I'm stickin'!"

"Anne, I tell you to go——"

"Huh!" Anne interrupted sharply. "I heard some one comin'. I hope it's Scanlon."

With bated breath they clung in their strange position, while the scraping sounds that Anne had heard on the rocks continued to come nearer. Then suddenly a man's voice spoke in guarded tones.

"That you, sheriff?" it asked in a harsh whisper.

"No," said Anne, "I ain't the sheriff. Come here and help me, whoever you are. Come quick! I can't hold this girl much longer."

"Can't hold what?"

"Shut up! Come on an' find out!"

A man took a few steps and stood over her.

"Lay down here on the other side o' this hole and reach down your arm through it," Anne commanded. "Don't ask questions. They's a girl down in there and I'm holdin' her wrist. Grab it, and then I'll git outa the way. Then you haul 'er up."

"Heavens above!"

"Shut up and do it! It's Doctor Shirley Chalmette!"

This last sentence seemed to have a magic effect on the man, for he flattened himself instantly and did Anne's bidding.

"Got 'er?"

"Yes."

Anne loosened her hold on Shirley's wrist and squirmed back from the hole. "I'll give you room," she said. "Now lift 'er out if you're half a man."

The newcomer was more than half a man, for he soon had risen to his knees as Shirley's arm came farther and farther through the hole. Then Anne grasped the wrist in both her hands, and the next instant Doctor Shirley Chalmette, dripping and chilled, was set upon her feet on solid stone, where she stood trembling and panting from the terrible strain.

"Thanks, brother," said Anne to the unknown rescuer. "Who are you?"

"Why, I'm—I'm—don't you know me?"

For a little Anne was silent. "Seems now I recollect your voice," she said. "Ain't you Mr. Epney, the dredger company's superintendent?"

"Yes, I am," was the reply. "And you're the girl they call Anne Drath, aren't you?"

"Yes," Anne told him. "And this is Doctor Chalmette, the lady doctor that is stayin' at Canary Bend."

"Heavens and earth, doctor!" cried Epney. "But we must be quiet," he quickly interrupted himself. Then, lowering his voice: "How on earth did you get down in there, Doctor Chalmette? What has been taking place up here?"

"That's too long a story fer to be told now, Mr. Epney," Anne cut in. "I got business to attend to. But I jest gotta know what you're doin' up here in these mountains."

"I might ask the same of you, Anne," retorted Epney grimly. "And—and you two girls must stay right where you are for the present. Something's going to

happen here shortly, and it'll be dangerous for you to leave. I'll come back for you soon."

"What's gonta happen?" demanded Anne. "And why did you ask, 'Is that you, sheriff?' "

"Did you hear me say that?"

"No, I dreamed it," Anne fired back at him.

Frank Epney was silent for nearly half a minute. "I might as well tell you," he said at last. "There was another big holdup to-night. Our messenger was robbed of twelve thousand and eighty dollars. You'll remember what I told you, doctor. Well, they got it, in spite of our precautions. But we were better prepared than they knew. I won't tell you all of the particulars now, but the main thing is that we've nosed out their hiding place here on Pinktop Mountain. Their cabin is now surrounded by the sheriff, his deputies, and a posse. Any moment they'll make the raid. The sheriff has gone to investigate, and they're only waiting for a signal from him. To-night sees the last of the Pinktop Mountain gang.

"So," he added, "you ladies must stay right here so as to be safe. There'll doubtless be shooting. You might get hurt. I'll not forget—after the raid I'll come for you and take you home. Then I want to know all about your coming here. They've been hunting all over the country for you, doctor. Tell me this one thing now: Did the outlaws kidnap you?"

"Yes," said Shirley.

"I thought so. Maybe I know why, too. But we'll let it all go now. I must get back with the posse. Stay right here and wring the water out of your clothes. You must be freezing. Good-by. You'll be safe here, I think."

And he hurried away from them through the dark, stumbling over the stones.

"That's all right fer him," Anne remarked. "But I got business to attend to. I gotta git Ben Gore before the posse does. I'll git the automatic I told you I had hid, and git to work. You stay here, doctor. If I don't come back to you, Mr. Epney will. Good-by."

"Wait!" called Shirley, as Anne, doubtless suspecting that the doctor would remonstrate with her, darted away over the rocks.

"Wait! Wait! You're not going on such a business alone!"

Shirley started running after her, tripped on the stones, and fell, scrambled to her feet again, and hurried on, remembering that it was unwise to raise her voice.

But, try though she did, she could not overtake the fleet-footed girl of the mountains. In the darkness Anne had vanished completely, and now the forest confronted her pursuer.

Shirley came to a stop at the edge of the trees, undecided what to do.

And then somebody leaped behind her and pinioned her arms to her sides.

CHAPTER X.

SUBPOENAED.

WHO in the dickens are you, anyway? What're you doin' here?"

"None of your business!" retorted Doctor Shirley Chalmette. "Who are *you?* Let me go!"

She struggled valiantly in the strong arms of her captor, but he held her as if she were a baby. It must be one of the posse, she thought. At first she had been seized with terror at the thought that he might be Benedict Gore.

"I'll show you who I am," the man said growlingly.

She did not recognize that voice as belonging to any one of the outlaws that she had been with.

"Do you belong to the sheriff's posse?" she asked. "If you do, it may interest you to know that I'm Doctor Chalmette, for whom the people of Canary Bend have been hunting."

"Never heard o' you, ma'am," replied the man, with more politeness than before. "And I don't know anything about anybody missin' from Canary Bend. I don't belong there. I'm from the county seat."

"But you belong to the sheriff's posse?" Shirley make it a question.

"What do you know about that?"

"Mr. Epney told me about it, and so——"

Through the silence of the vast forest a shrill whistle sounded.

"There! I knew it!" growled out Shirley's captor. "Look what you've done! The raid's on."

"Then turn me loose and go."

"Not on your life, kid! I don't know anything about you. And I've heard tell there's a girl connected with the Pinktop gang, some way. You go with me. C'mon!"

He was a surprisingly strong man, this proud resident of the county seat—strong and stubborn. He dragged Shirley rapidly along through the pines in what she thought must be the direction of the bandits' cabin. She resisted all she could, but her vigorous efforts seemed to have no effect on him.

He just dragged her on.

Not far ahead a rifle shot reverberated through the trees. Another drowned the echo of the first. Hoarse cries rang out. A third shot. A fusillade.

Of a sudden Shirley's captor dragged her into the open space in the middle of which the cabin stood. The windows were alight. Men were darting here and there. Others were at the doors and windows. There came one more shot, and then a strange silence set in.

"Guess it's all over, darn it!" grumbled the man at the doctor's side. "That's what *you* done! Now I've missed all the fun! C'mon with me again!"

As they neared the cabin men changed their positions and gathered in a group before the door.

"All over?" eagerly questioned he who held Shirley's wrist.

"Sure," came the drawled answer. "Got every one of 'em but Gore."

"Did Gore get away?"

"He wasn't in the cabin. Who in thunder you leadin' there?"

"Search me! But I'm leadin' her, ain't I? I wanta show her to the sheriff. Where's he at?"

"Inside. They're all disarmed and handcuffed. Bert Willets got a bullet in his neck. That's all the harm that was done. Go on in."

The group before the lighted door, gaping at Shirley, drew aside; and the man who had missed all the fun roughly escorted his prisoner over the threshold.

For the girl, at least, a strange sight was revealed within the cabin. Against one wall, facing toward her, stood the six members of the Pinktop Mountain gang that had suffered capture. Steel handcuffs on the wrists of all of them gleamel in the light. One face stared from the line appealingly at her, and she caught her breath. Somewhere within her there came a quick stab of pain.

Saul Scanlon—with manacles on his wrists!

Shirley closed her eyes a moment, then opened them and tried not to look at him. She even shrugged. She had troubles of her own.

These, however, were shortly over. A man whom she had seen at Canary Bend stepped forward with a startled exclamation.

"Why—why, where'd you git her?" he cried. "How are you, Doctor Chalmette? Canary Bend's been scourin' the whole country fer you."

Shirley smiled wanly. "I'm sorry to have caused so much trouble, Mr. Underwood, isn't it?"

"Yes'm—that's my name."

Three others who had previously seen the doctor came forward, and

Shirley's captor, rather reluctantly, she imagined, released her and offered a clumsy apology.

"I wouldn't stay in here, miss," said the sheriff.

"I don't care to at all," she said with a smile for his thoughtfulness. "May I go outside?"

"Certain-lee. We'll see that you get safe back to the Bend, too."

She smiled her thanks, cast one fleeting look at Scanlon, and stepped out into the cold night, shivering, but too independent to make her discomfort known.

As she left the doorstep she heard a man telling the late arrival: "Gore didn't only get away, but the twelve thousand and eighty went with 'im."

Shirley stopped short.

So her tormentor had escaped with the money! While Shirley naturally detested him, she rather admired Gore's proclivity for taking care of himself at the expense of the other members of the gang.

The men, clustered about outside, stood gawking at her in the light that streamed from the cabin door. She strolled away into the trees, but at once came upon more of them who were in charge of the posse's horses. She made a right-angle turn to avoid them, and walked in the direction of the steep slope that pitched down into the Falcon River Cañon. She was wet and cold, and wished to keep in motion.

She had not taken many steps when a dark figure suddenly confronted her. She drew back, alarmed at this new phantom that had so unexpectedly presented itself.

"Who is it?" she demanded, ready to turn and flee.

"Doctor! Is it you?" The voice was that of Anne Drath.

"Why, Anne!" cried Shirley. "Where have you been? What has happened?"

"I was gonta try and git Scanlon," was the girl's reply. "Did they git all the outlaws? Is it all over?"

"Yes," Shirley told her. "All of them are handcuffed but Benedict Gore. He escaped. Scanlon is a prisoner with the rest." The doctor sighed ever so lightly as she divulged this.

"Then *you* come with me," said Anne. "Please, doctor! I need you!"

"I'll go, of course. How can I help you? What are we to do?"

"Come on. I gotta have some one quick. They's no time to lose, doctor. Take my hand; I'll guide you. And I'll tell you what I want while we're on the way."

Ready to help this loyal girl in any way that she could, Shirley placed her hand in hers, and Anne glided away through the trees, sure-footed, positive of her ability to direct the way.

"If I couldn't git Scanlon," she said, "I wanted you. But I didn't have much hope of findin' you. I dassent trust none o' the posse. They might pinch me."

"I understand. What has happened?"

"I've trailed Gore to his hole," she replied. "He was jest sneakin' off through the woods when I got near the cabin, after I left you. I followed him. I c'n see like a cat in the dark. And I run 'im down."

"I don't understand, Anne."

"He was put wise that the raid was comin'," Anne partially explained. "So he ducked. And he had the gold amalgam on his shoulder when he went. The boys was drinkin'. He give 'em the slip."

"Yes—go on."

"I think," Anne continued, "that I'm about to find out who killed Win Brady. I think Gore's gonta say he done it before very long."

"But still I don't understand."

"I wanted a witness," Anne said. "Now I got one—you. Le's hurry! You'll see and hear enough so's you'll

know all of it before long. C'n you travel a little faster, doctor—kinda trot, you know?"

Shirley quickened her pace to keep up with Anne, who was now directing the way at a dogtrot through the immense black trees.

They came to the ridge of rocks in which was the cave where they had been imprisoned. But they approached it from a different direction, this time, and for quite a way Anne followed it on virtually level land without ascending. Then she led the way into the great rocks, winding in and out among them as if she were following the path to her brother's ranch.

Presently she warned: "Easy from now on, doctor. Don't talk, an' watch your step. Go quiet."

Making as little noise as was necessary, they continued to wind in and out through the boulders. Undoubtedly, Shirley thought, they were following a sort of trail. Slower and slower became Anne's progress.

She halted and listened.

Dully to the doctor's ears came muffled sounds from ahead of them—men's voices.

"We're in time," Anne whispered. "Come on. Go keerful."

They tiptoed forward. They turned the corner of an immense monolithic stone, and ahead of them glimmered a light.

"I'll go ahead now," came the mountain girl's low-voiced statement.

And as Shirley released her hand she felt something cold and hard transfered to it from the other hand.

Anne's automatic!

Slow step at a time, they pressed over the stony way toward the glimmering light and the voices.

Then suddenly Shirley bumped into her leading companion. Anne had stopped dead still, and now she whispered over her shoulder: "This is fur enough. Keep quiet an' listen."

The masculine voices that came from about a rock just ahead of them were lifted rather high. Evidently a heated argument was in progress. Shirley was quite certain of the voice of Ben Gore, who was speaking now.

"I'm tellin' you I'm gonta do what I said," it came to their eager ears. "And they ain't no use your arguin'."

"Gore's drunk," whispered Anne. "Awful drunk."

"But listen, Ben," came the other voice. "I've told you fifty times that it's a big piece of foolishness. You don't dare take such a risk. Be reasonable, can't you?"

Whose voice was that? How familiar it sounded, even though high-pitched in argument. Shirley knew it well, it seemed, but could not place it.

"They ain't no resk," growlingly came Gore's voice. "The sheriff an' the posse ain't gonta be there half an hour. They'll find me and the amalgam gone, and they'll make a bluff at huntin' for me round about. What good'll it do 'em? They don't know this place. And if any o' the boys feel like squealin' to get even with me, they'd never think I'd be stoppin' so clost to the cabin. So they won't tell the sheriff about this place. All we gotta do is give the posse time to vamose, then I'll go an' git that girl. I tell you I want her, and she's goin' outa this country with me. I'm gonta marry that girl an' settle down. With this here split between you an' me, I got over six thousan', ain't I? And I got that much more stored away where the mice can't get at it. Me fer the straight stuff from now on."

"But the sheriff may leave men behind, to hide in the trees in the hope that you'll show up."

"Rats! Nothin' doin'! They'd never think to do that. I've made my getaway, ain't I? Well, then, d'you believe they'd think I'd be fool enough to hide out clost by, or go back to the cabin? You're nuts, Ep!"

"Ep!" muttered Shirley. "Frank Epney!"

"I guess now you're beginnin' to understand a few things, ain't you?" Anne Drath whispered in Shirley's ear.

CHAPTER XI.

"JUST A BLUFF."

"DO you mean," whispered Shirley, "that Frank Epney, superintendent for the dredger company, is in league with the Pinktop gang?"

Momentarily the argument on the other side of the stone had subsided. The listening girls heard the squeak of a cork. Benedict Gore was about to have another drink.

"Sure," Anne whispered back. "You never guessed, did you? Neither does the sheriff. It's Ep that's been makin' it easy fer the boys to git away with their holdups all along. He pretends to protect his messenger, but don't. To-night it was all fixed up fer him to have the sheriff's posse in the wrong place. He's been gettin' a big whack o' the loot, naturally."

"But this raid?"

"Ep and Gore planned it all. Only Gore knows Ep's got anythin' to do with the gang. Ep and Gore wanted the gang to git caught to-night. So Ep he leads the sheriff here, pretendin' he's found out the gang's hidin' place. O' course I don't know jest how he worked it. Then he let Gore know when to sneak outa the cabin with the gold. They're here to split it now. Then Gore'll leave the country, and Ep'll go on with the dredger company, jest like he done before. You heard Ben Gore say he was gonta take you along, didn't you?"

Shirley shuddered. "Yes," she replied. "I heard him."

"Course he thinks we're still locked up in that cave. Guess he thinks to offer to git us out with ropes, if we'll do as he says—that is, if *you* will. If you wouldn't, he'd likely let us stay in there and starve."

"I understand. But what makes you think Gore will confess to the murder of your sweetheart to-night?"

"I heard 'em arguin' here," Anne replied. "I've had a hunch all along that Ep knew Gore done it. I thought, if they were mad at each other, Ep might tell Gore he'd turn 'im up fer that, if he didn't do like he told 'im to."

"Then Epney, not Gore, is the real leader of the gang?"

"O' course. Ep's the brains, as they say, and Ben's the fella that carries out Ep's schemes."

Silence still reigned beyond the rock. The girls, too, were silent now, wondering at the stillness of the men. Shirley thought of Scanlon, as he had looked at her when she saw him with the handcuffs on. Why couldn't she stop thinking of him?

"Well?" came suddenly from the vicinity of the light.

"Well, what?" demanded Benedict Gore.

"Have you made up your mind to be reasonable?" asked Epney. "You've had three drinks to aid you. A few more and I'll take the whole of the stuff and leave you here, dead to the world."

"Oh, you will, will you? Fat chance you got to get away with that! S'pose I was to tell that Mr. Frank Epney, super'ntendent o' the dredger, had worked with me to rob the comp'ny?"

"Oh, you wouldn't care to do that," Epney answered sarcastically.

"No? But supposin' I was to tell 'em somethin' else?"

"What, for instance?"

The answer came to the ears of the girls like a stunning blow:

"That you croaked Winfred Brady!"

"What!" exclaimed Epney. "You're crazy, man! Every member of the gang knows that you did that!"

"D'you think so?" was the complacent answer. "Well, le' me tell you some-

thin', Mr. Epney: I ain't been such a poor tool as you think I have.

"Poor tool—poor fool! Oh, no, nothin' doin', Ep! Two of us saw you bump Brady. They's two members o' the Pinktop gang that knows who's been runnin' the thing. One's me. The othern's Ed Drath. Ed was with me that night. Him and me suspicioned that Win was gettin' sweet on Ed's sister, Anne. And Ed he knew that Anne was against the gang. He said if Anne fell for the kid, she'd try to talk 'im into quittin'. So him and me was on the lookout that same night. We followed you and him when you left the cabin. We was right behind you when you shot 'im. Then, o' course, I had ta tell Ed that you was the brains o' the whole cheese. But he's kep' it dark. He won't squeal. I've paid 'im to. And if he goes to jail, you gotta get 'im out if you can. And when he gits out, you gotta kinda help 'im along, you know."

For some time there was silence beyond the rock. Then, from Epney:

"And I suppose that Ed Drath knew you and I were going to double cross the gang to-night, did he?"

"Oh, no, not that," chuckled Gore. "I didn't say I unburdened my soul to Ed entirely. Ed'll blame only me for the loss o' the loot."

Another long space of silence. Then said Epney's voice softly:

"So far as I can see, then, Gore, there's only one thing for me to do."

"Yes? And what might that be?"

"I'll admit that I killed Win Brady," Epney continued. "He was learning too much. That Anne Drath has suspected me of being a member of the gang for some time, I think. I don't know how she got onto it, but she proved that she had done so that night. I heard her telling the kid about me in the cabin. I was listening at the window. So I followed him when he left. That's why I killed him, not because he was in love with Anne and was about to quit the gang."

"Oh, that was it!" sneeringly replied Gore. "I thought your methods was a little harsh. But I see they was an ex-c'llent reason. But you was gonta tell me what you're gonta do about it, Ep."

"Just this," said Ep.

A loud explosion leaped to the eardrums of Shirley. Then only did she realize that Anne had darted away from her. Following the sound of the shot came the mountain girl's shrill voice:

"Drop that gun, Epney! Hands up! I'll kill you if——"

Anne's threat ended in a shrill scream. Scarce knowing what she did, but loyal to her very core, Doctor Shirley Chalmette sprang forward to the aid of her new-found friend.

Anne Drath's intended capture of the confessed murderer of her sweetheart had proved an utter failure. Not knowing the relative positions of the two men when she leaped around the rock to knock up Epney's revolver, she had run into a trap. Her upthrown arm had ruined Epney's aim and saved the life of Gore. But she had sprung into the very arms of Gore, with her back to him, to do it. And now as she covered Epney with her automatic in one hand and held the wrist of his gun hand with the other, Benedict Gore, untouched by Epney's bullet, reached out and grabbed her. In a twinkling her automatic was wrenched from her hand and she was helpless.

"Well, well, well, Ep! Here's a pretty piece of business!" Gore chuckled. "You tryin' to gun me, and little Anne gunnin' for you. Now what we gonta do?"

"Kill both of you!" growled Epney, and slowly brought down the automatic.

Then, with a scream of rage and terror, Shirley threw herself upon him.

"Ho-ho!" laughed Gore. "Now we *are* gonta have some fun!"

And as Shirley wrestled with Epney, and Gore crushed the striking Anne to him with one arm and brought into action his own gun with the hand of the other, an unexpected battering-ram burst upon the scene, flailing right and left. Gore's gun clattered on the stones as something struck his wrist and broke the bones of it. A shot rang out, and a long scream came from Epney's lips as a bullet struck his automatic and sent it crashing against a rock.

"Now, stop it!" ordered a commanding voice. "Up with 'em, men! Make it snappy! I shoot to kill!"

Shirley Chalmette felt herself released, and as if in a dream looked into the handsome face of Saul Scanlon.

There were no handcuffs on his wrists, but there was a gun in either hand—big, heavy guns with enormous hammers, and the hammers lay back like the ears of an angry horse. There was a cold, hard smile on Scanlon's face, but it sweetened as his eyes flickered momentarily on Shirley.

Then into the scene stepped the sheriff, with a six-gun in one hand and handcuffs in the other.

"Pretty work, Saul," he drawled. "Pretty work, old man! Well, Gore—and you, too, Mr. Epney—get into these steel garments. It's gettin' late, and it's a long ways to the highway."

"But—but you were handcuffed," puzzled Doctor Shirley. "I saw them on you."

"Just a bluff," answered Saul Scanlon laughingly. "I'm nothin' but a bluff, anyway. Ask Anne."

Members of the posse had come up behind the sheriff. The prisoners and their loot had been taken away. Left alone in the rocks were Anne Drath, Doctor Chalmette, and the man who owned placer claims on the Falcon River.

"Yes, he's a bluff," Anne verified. "But you'll like 'im jest the same, Doctor Chalmette. He's Win Brady's brother. Winfred Brady was jest my poor boy's outlaw name. His right one was Paul Scanlon. An' this here's Big Brother Saul."

"Yes?" Shirley's big blue eyes roved from one smiling face to the other.

"I'm from Texas," Saul said to her. "We'd lost track of the kid for some time. He'd run away to be an outlaw with a fellow named Sam Finn that had drifted into our country. We didn't know that, though, mother and I. Then came a letter from this little girl here—my old pal Anne—telling us all about the killing. And, well, I just drifted up here and had a talk with Anne. We decided that the best way for me to become a member of the gang was for me to buy up some claims on the Falcon, and kick like a bay steer about the dredger company robbing me. I kicked so hard, and let it be so well known to members of the gang how I hated the dredge people, that they offered to take me in. I wanted to help Anne find out who murdered the kid, you see. And, Anne, I guess we turned the trick to-night. I never suspected Epney, did you?"

"No," said Anne, "and neither did the sheriff.

"You see," Saul explained, "I got in touch with the sheriff long ago and told him the situation. He promised to let me go ahead and find out in my own way who killed my brother, if I'd help him round up the gang when the best opportunity offered to make a clean sweep of all of them. But—but——" He turned his brown eyes on Anne, and his voice trembled as he said: "I'm sorry about your brother Ed, little pal." The tears sprang to Anne's eyes, and in a twinkling Saul's arm was about her shoulder.

"There! There!" he soothed. "It couldn't be helped. You did your best to get him out of the gang. And don't

you worry. You're going to Texas with me. Mother needs you."

He bent down and softly kissed her on the forehead. And then the eyes of Doctor Shirley filled, but in her heart, besides the sympathy that she felt for Anne, was a pain that she did not want to understand.

And then suddenly Saul Scanlon stood before her. "We've a ranch down there, Shirley," he said. "Just mother and me in the family. Good place for a lady doctor to follow her career. Anne could keep house, you could give pills to the natives, and I—well, I guess I could answer the telephone and say whether or not the doc was in. Le's all three go together. What d'you say, Shirley?"

Doctor Shirley Chalmette did not say much about it at all that night; she was too nearly worn out to think. But after Frank Epney had been convicted of the murder of Paul Scanlon, alias Winfred Brady, the three of them journeyed together to that big ranch in Texas.

A LIBRARY ON ARIZONA

THE Southwest Museum, of Los Angeles, California, has a library of fifteen thousand volumes, not to mention pamphlets, maps, photographs, sketches, newspaper and magazine articles, all relating to Arizona, which was presented to the institution by Doctor J. A. Munk, who thirty-eight years ago began to collect everything in print about that State.

At a time when Arizona was only a vast desert wilderness, and a man might ride all day in any direction without seeing a human being or a living animal, Doctor Munk and his brothers established a cattle ranch in the very center of the Apache region. The Indians at that time were under their famous chiefs, Cochise and Geronimo, and a white man's life was uncertain. But Doctor Munk was so impressed by the various natural phenomena of the country that he at once set about getting all the books he could find which treated of "the life, resources, minerals, industries, politics, and anthropology of Arizona."

"A much wider field is covered by these books," says the doctor, "than Arizona. For Arizona was once a part of Old Mexico as well as New Mexico, and it is intimately connected with the history of California and other adjacent territory. Books that describe any of the countries mentioned often overlap and contain something about Arizona, so that a vast country and many subjects are included in this literature. It has been my aim to collect everything about Arizona, good, bad, or indifferent."

The books are in five languages and date from 1030 to the present time. Besides valuable information about the early exploration of the State, one can find many interesting and curious facts about the Papago, Hopi, Pima, and Apache Indians. The books are fittingly housed in the Caracol Tower, from the windows of which one looks out upon the hills encircling Los Angeles. The walls are covered with gay old Navajo rugs, Indian baskets, and other trophies from the Munk ranch.

A Squar' Old Fool

By

Harrison Conrard

Author of "Drawn in Sand," etc.

ONE was squat and gray-mustached; that was Job Warnock. The other was a grizzled giant; that was Harve Logan. They were prospectors, partners. They were camped in Chaparral Cañon in the Graham Mountains. They finished their belated supper and left the washing of the plates and pans until morning.

All day a storm had been brewing; the night was chill and viscidly murky. Harve added a generous supply of juniper wood to the camp fire; then both men lolled back on their beds to suck at their black pipes.

Hardly had they settled themselves comfortably when a cascade of boulders rattled down from up the steep cañon wall. Harve Logan, startled, jumped up. There was no nervous haste in Job Warnock's deliberate movements; and yet he was only a split second behind his partner in gaining his feet.

The two pairs of eyes strained their unpenetrating stare into the velvet upper blackness of the pitchy night. The disturbed dark fell into a vacuum of vibrant stillness; but the silence was brief, so brief that two or three heartbeats would have measured its duration.

It was broken by the blurred clipping of a human voice—they were sure it was a human voice—and almost simultaneously came the cracking and ripping of brush, as a heavy body tore through it on its plunge down the wall. A dull crash followed somewhere above, then another brief pause, the ripping sound again, prolonged through tense seconds, then a hollow thud and a grunt, as a black mass fell within a dozen feet of the snapping camp fire.

The two men advanced a cautious pace or two toward the vague blur. There came a stir, and they recoiled, with their hands on their pistol butts. The mass began to squirm. Slowly, but with stubborn persistence, it evolved into definite shape, then brazenly proclaimed its identity in a series of blatant hee-haws.

"By cripes, it's a burro!" Harve ejaculated. "It liked to skeert me!"

"Me, too!" said Job with a low chuckle. "And the pesky thing's come down alive!" There was not the remotest suggestion of surprise in his tone. "Rained in—just like he'd fell from them black clouds that's been gatherin' all day."

"And he's got a pack on his back, too!" Harve announced, as he advanced boldly upon the intruder.

"Sure's you're alive! And a rope round his neck!" Job's tone remained casual. A shower of burros, dropping from the bleak sky, might have jarred a note of amazement from his placid lips, but a single burro—even one with a pack on its back—never!

He put hand to the rope, and he could tell by the feel that it was new. He drew against it tentatively, and the burro limped a painful pace or two.

"Anyhow he don't seem to be much hurt," he observed; "but I reckon he must be some skinned up after skatin' down through them rocks and chaparral."

"But where could he 'a' come from?" Harve questioned with a tragic gesture. "They ain't no trail up yander, are they?"

"Not so far as I know, and I've tromped round these petickler Arizona parts consid'able in my day," Job averred. "And that's some creepy place up there, I'm tellin' you. Why, man alive, a mountain sheep'd have to wear spikes in his hoofs to get a footin' in them rocks. I reckon the critter must 'a' strayed off from some feller's pack outfit and got lost."

"Mebby," Harve speculated. "But how do we know they ain't no trail up yander? You want to recollect that we ain't been round these Graham parts for clost onto five years now, and sometimes five years makes lots o' difference in a place."

"Sure," Job agreed. "Come to think of it, this is the first time me'n you've been in these mountains since we guided the sheriff and his posse when they run down that feller who robbed the Sagetown bank. What's that his name was?"

"Colleen McGuire," Harve advised, after a moment's reflection.

"That's the feller—Colleen McGuire. Called Colleen because he looked and talked so much like a girl—a regular sissy boy. But there wasn't nothin' sissy about his nerve and the way he jiggered the trigger o' that little gun o' his'n."

"Them was the kid's ways, all right; but, as I was sayin', they might be a trail up yander now, Job."

"Mebby so, but it ain't likely. Anyway, whether there is, or whether there ain't, the feller that lost this burro could be in a heap o' trouble if he's crawlin' round them rocks on a night like this. I was sure I heard somebody talkin', just as the critter began to slide."

"Me, too."

"I'm goin' to holler." Job made a megaphone of his hands. "Hello! Hello!"

He got no answer, save the triple echo of his own voice, which bounded back and forth between the close cañon walls.

"Well," Harve suggested, "let's see if they's anything in the pack that'll give us a line. Then we'll turn the critter loose. He'll find our bunch real pronto."

"None of his bones don't seem to be broke, nohow," Job announced, after running a hand over the burro's legs; "and I'd say he must 'a' tumbled five or six hundred feet, too. It's somethin' marvelenous how far a burro can fall without even losin' his voice."

"He just sort o' skeetered down the wall, and the brush saved his fool neck," was Harve's sage explanation.

The pack was unlashed, and the packsaddle removed. The burro limped off into the murky blackness when the rope was unknotted from its neck. Job stirred the fire to a brighter blaze. Under the steady flare of light the two men turned back the many folds of canvas to explore the contents of the pack.

They found a few cooking utensils, which had never been used, a whole slab of bacon, three loaves of bread, some tobacco, a dozen tins of vegetables, meats and fruits, and a new walrus traveling bag.

The bag was locked, and the catch stubbornly resisted the assaults made upon it with a table fork and a piece of wire. Harve suggested slashing the leather, but Job demurred.

While they were prodding at the unyielding intricacies of the lock, the December clouds, which had been gathering all day, massed into a black pall and began to shake down a sifting of fine snow. The tiny-flakes hissed into the fire and subdued the flare of the blaze.

The two men abandoned their task. They hurriedly merged the contents of the pack with their own possessions and tented the canvas over the low pyramid. Then each crawled into his bed, which lay one beside the other, and tarpaulins were drawn up, as a protection against the storm. After a while Harve asked from the depths of his blankets:

"That feller, Colleen McGuire, got five years, didn't he?"

"Them's my recollection," Job replied sleepily. "Plead guilty and swallered his medicine like a little man."

"Then his time must be about up by now. Somethin' round thirty thousand he got away with, wasn't it?"

"Thereabouts, as I remember."

"And, if you'll recollect, Job, it was said that he must 'a' cached his loot som'ers over round this part o' the Grahams. Anyhow, here's where the officers made their big hunt for it, without never findin' nothin'."

"It was just a guess," Job sent back. "He kept a close mouth on where he'd buried it. More'n likely that pal o' his'n, 'Red' Duncan, I believe his name was, that give him the slip and played him dirty, gettin' away clean and leavin' Colleen to face the music, came back later on and sneaked it across the border."

"Ain't likely," Harve objected. "He was yaller clean through. He'd never have the nerve to come back. With all their watchin' and huntin', the officers was never able to get a line on him, so far as I know. Anyhow, if you'll just recollect, it was said that even Red Duncan couldn't 'a' knowed where the money was hid out. He give Colleen the slip in the dark, after droppin' from his hoss, before they'd got a dozen miles out o' town, and then beat it on foot."

"I know," said Job. "The officers was hot on their trail right from the jump. Seems like Red must 'a' got cold feet—and him the one that actual done the work, too, so all the signs showed. Yaller clean through just as you said. Fine way for a feller to treat a pal, I'd say, whether he's straight or crooked."

"Sure!" Harve concurred. "Anyhow, after Red cleaned out, Colleen picked up the empty hoss and led it all the way over here, just to make it look like his pal was still with him, so's the reptile could have a chanct to make a clean get-away."

"And that's how Colleen come to get ketched, too," said Job. "Leadin' the hoss cut down his gait. It showed that the kid was a real man in some ways. Even that low-down trick didn't stop him from playin' square with his pal. Just the same, I'd hate to be Red Duncan now, if Colleen ever ketches up with him."

"Them bein' the true facts," Harve propounded, following up his line of thought, "we know for certain that Red never came to the Grahams, but probable hit straight for the border; so it ain't likely he could 'a' knowed where the stuff was hid. Now, if Colleen's out o' the pen, I'll bet the very first thing he'd do would be to sneak back and dig up that cache. Don't you reckon?"

"Mebby so."

"Lyin' here, I've been speculatin' some, Job," said Harve. "That burro never'd climb up yander all by himself. He was either driv or led. Some feller was navigatin' him when he slipped, an nobody's goin' to tackle them up-and-down rocks on a night like this, less'n

he's got some real good reason." His voice trailed off into silence. Then: "I just can't rest until I see what's in that valise, Job."

"Aw, go to sleep!" Job scolded with mild irritation. "We'll find some way to open it up in the mornin'. Forget it. I'm dead tired and sleepy." He crawled deeper into the blankets and dozed off.

II.

He was awakened by his partner shaking him violently.

"Job! Job! Wake up!" Harve was speaking in a suppressed tone. "It's just as I thought! I pried the valise open, and it's full o' money—chock full! Greenbacks and yallerbacks. It's Colleen's cache!"

"No!" Job rose to a sitting posture, rubbed his eyes, and yawned with lazy abandon.

"Look!" Harve lifted up a package of currency, and his hand trembled, as he struck a match. The wavering flare illumined the top bill, a gold certificate, warm yellow, like the belly of a catfish. "Yallerbacks, Job! Yallerbacks! Look at 'em!"

"Honest?" There was neither surprise nor incredulity in Job's query. It was utterly devoid of even a flutter of excitement.

"Sure it's yallerbacks! Look at 'em!"

"How much d' you reckon there is?" Job asked casually.

"I've counted forty-two bundles, and they seems to be five hundred to a bundle!" Harve replied breathlessly. "Twenty-one thousand, Job! Some strike! A regular glory hole!"

"Oh, say!—twenty-one thousand!" Job repeated, with an exasperating yawn. "Some pay dirt, Harve!" An egg plant could hardly have appeared more indifferent to that miraculous shower of gold; but Harve had learned to understand his partner. Long ago Job's phlegmatic nature had ceased to madden him.

"No more prospectin' for us, Job!" Harve declared gloatingly. "No more whackin' through the mesquite. We'll divide it, and——"

"It ain't ourn to divide, Harve—don't forget that." For the first time Job's slow voice revealed a flash of genuine interest. "We ain't high-graders, me and you, and you know as well as me that it's got to go back to the people it belongs to, if they can be found; and, if it's Colleen's loot, or a part of it, we know mighty well who it belongs to."

"You're plumb crazy!" There was a quick rise of irritation in Harve. "We need it a lot worse'n the Sagetown bank. Anyway, it rained in on us, didn't it? And a feller's got a right to stick out his hat and ketch some drops from the clouds, ain't he?"

"You ain't talkin' to me, Harve," Job said in his quiet, chiding way. "It ain't our'n, I'm tellin' you; and we're goin' to turn it over to its rightful owners, if we can find 'em. But let's take a little squint at one o' them bales. I'd just like to feel the heft o' that much money, all done up in one hunk."

He struck a match when one of the packages of currency was passed to him. His curved palm protected the fluttering flame against the drizzle of snow, as he critically scrutinized the money.

"If this here's a part o' Colleen's cache, he's sure kept it in a cool, dry place all these years," he commented judiciously. "Looks like it was just made yesterday." He thrilled to the crisp feel, as his thumb riffled the bills, which were held bound by means of an elastic band and a narrow ribbin of blue paper. Suddenly his thumb clamped tight to hold half of the sheaf poised. He bent forward and peered intently. "Hold on here!" he breathed. "Hold on! What's this?"

The flickering light snuffed out, and he struck a second match.

"This can't be none o' Colleen's loot, Harve! Look at this bank note! 1920's printed on it as plain as your eye! There wasn't no 1920 bank notes back in 1917, the year that Colleen made his big haul, was there?"

Another match hissed to flame. Harve squinted at the bill.

"By cripes, you're right, John!" he attested. "It sure don't look like it could be Colleen's cache, and that's a fact." He straightened. "But what's the odds? It's our'n, ain't it? We found it, and finders is keepers. That's the prospector's law. We'll split it, just as I was sayin', half your'n and half mine."

"If you can find the owner o' this here money, it's got to go back to him, Harve," Job said with flat finality, as he passed the package back to his partner. "If it rightfully belongs to that feller up yander," jerking a thumb toward the veiled height—"supposin' there is somebody up there, which seems more'n likely, he sure would 'a' made a holler before now. Anyway, burros don't go traipsin' round all alone, with a pile o' money on their backs. So it's my guess that it's been stole—and real recent, at that. There ain't no chance to find out nothin' to-night, as dark as it is and with this storm on; but first thing to-morrow mornin'——"

"You're a fool!" Harve cut across his sentence with a truculent snap. "We can get away with it easy, and nobody'll ever know nothin' about it. It's enough to keep me'n you comfortable the rest of our days, and we ain't so young no more. Just remember that."

"Now looky here, Harve," Job began gravely. "We've been square all our lives, me and you. We're growin' old, both bein' round sixty, and we've been partners for nigh on twelve years, makin' our little stake from time to time, and enjoyin' full and plenty the spendin' o' whatever we got hold of, just because we'd earned it honest, and it was our'n—all our'n. Always we could look any man in the face and tell him to go plumb to the devil, without never no come-backs. Are we goin' to backslide now, when we're beginnin' to step lively on toward the end o' the trail? No, siree! We're partners, Harve, and it's always been our creed never to do nothin' that we was ashamed to let the sun shine on. We've got to be true to each other and to our lifelong principles, partner. So bury that valise under the tarp and come back to bed. I'm goin' to sleep."

"Preachin' again!" Harve growled. "However, I ain't contradictin' you on them p'ints, Job; but it sure grinds hard to have to let go, and it stickin' right to a feller's fingers, just like a feather all gobbed up with molasses."

Job furtively watched the reluctant hand take up the bag and replace it under the canvas. He dropped back on the bed; then he sat up with a start. Was that a twig that cracked off up the cañon? He turned a quick eye in that direction. Was that a shadow, a deeper blackness than the night, close up against the wall? And was that a movement there in the vague dark? Ah, the burro! It must be the burro.

When Harve went back to his blankets, Job crawled down into the depths of his bed again, drew up the canvas, for a shield against the sifting snow, rolled over with a satisfied grunt, and soon fell into a deep sleep.

III.

The morning broke with a scattered flock of clouds scudding across the sky. Some were swinging so low that they beat against one of the cañon's sides and hung heavily on the rim, blotting out the upper portion of the wall.

The spent storm had been hardly more than a flurry; but it had left the ground covered with a couple of inches of snow. Job shook off the white counterpane

from his tarpaulin, threw back the blankets, yawned, stretched, and called his partner's name. No answer.

His eyes turned in a silent inquiry to Harve's bed. An unbroken level of snow lay smooth on its canvas. He called again, then shouted; but only his own voice came back to him in triple echo.

He arose, a cold suspicion clawing at him. He hurried across in his bare feet and threw back the corner of the canvas where he had seen his partner replace the treasure. Somehow he did not expect to find the precious bag; so the void into which he stared awakened in him not the slightest flutter of surprise. But he suddenly grew dizzy with a nauseating sense of depression. His partner had broken faith and the perfidy of it overwhelmed him utterly.

Dropping the tarpaulin he stepped mincingly back through the snow and quickly got into his clothes. He looked under Harve's bed canvas to ascertain if the six-shooter and rifle were in their accustomed place; but the weapons were gone. Then he built a fire, his usual cool deliberation not deserting him. While his coffee was brewing, he made diligent search for Harve's trail. There was none. The clouds had befriended the fugitive in his guilty flight.

Job soddenly cooked his breakfast and ate it without relish from a soiled plate. He was impatient to begin the climb up the cañon wall into the overhanging clouds, which now fringed the rim's ragged edge, like heavy folds of creamy lace, in quest of a solution of that mysterious avalanche of treasure, now vanished. He was more eager still to find a clew to the direction his partner had taken, and to follow it with the fortitude of a righteous soul that would suffer eternal torment rather than make compromise with dishonor. His camp fire had been violated. He must find Harve and bring him back.

He could not undertake the former task until the warming sun had made safe the way by driving the snow from the treacherous rocks. As for the latter, there was no clew to guide him. All was vague uncertainty.

Harve Logan's sin became Job's personal shame; and the weight of it oppressed him sorely. For nearly twelve years they had been together, partners, sharing hardships and dangers, and, until now, Harve had never swerved from the clean, straight path which all his life Job had marked for himself, and which he austerely prescribed for any man who might make journey with him.

Whom he chose for a companion must accept his rigorous code of honor. That much he had always demanded; and that much Harve Logan had always given. It had been the organic law of their comradeship.

Job was utterly crushed. He was loath to believe that the man whom he had taken to his bosom, as partner and companion, had broken the compact of mutual trust. It was incredible that Harve, of all men, could thus have wantonly abjured the faith.

His feet were heavy when he set out to make search for the burros. He did not know just why he was looking them up. His will was a laggard; he was dazed; he had no plans. But, as he plodded dully along the cañon floor, at least one vague purpose evolved out of the jumble in his thoughts.

He must minister to the injuries of the acrobatic little beast that had descended upon his camp from the upper blackness of the night. He must assuage its pain, even though he felt a fierce resentment rising against the creature. It had been the serpent in his Eveless Eden. It had come with the temptation which had caused his partner's fall.

The burros were huddled together in a cove, nearly a mile up the cañon; and among them moped the dejected little creature that had come down out of

the clouds. Job let his eyes run over the beast in a sluggish survey of its injuries; then he stepped back and stared. It was not a strange burro at all, that creature that had fallen out of the night, but was one of his very own.

He stumbled upon the explanation a little later, when he rounded a rocky barrier and came upon two drooping horses that were shivering in the morning chill. The strength of the two animals had been consumed. They had been used to the margin of utter exhaustion.

One had been ridden, and the other bore the marks of a packsaddle. After a brief search, Job found the riding saddle. It had been thrown carelessly behind a bunch of catclaw. It was plain that the rider had happened upon the burros, and he had seen in them an index to a camp somewhere not far down the cañon. Probably he had seen the glow of the camp fire.

He must have had a very good reason to choose the perilous heights rather than risk a meeting with some of his fellows on the safe ground below. The two horses had been so far spent that they could not climb that steep mountainside; so they had been abandoned, and the burro commandeered to carry the load. All this Job understood without speculative effort.

IV.

Job led the injured burro back to his camp. While he was attending to its cuts and bruises, a group of a dozen horseman rode up, all heavily armed. It was the sheriff and his posse. Job's quick eye flashed over the men; but he saw not a single familiar face. Even the sheriff, a big fellow of thirty or thereabouts, was a stranger to him. A period of five years brings many changes in an Arizona community.

The sheriff dismounted. "Howdy, stranger!" he made his careless greeting with a jerky, upflung gesture. The rest of the posse remained in the saddle and spread out like a fan.

"Mornin', sir," Job returned a trifle curtly.

"I'm the sheriff, stranger. Name's Mason. And who might you be?" His eyes narrowed, as he surveyed the camp and Job, all in one comprehensive glance. He stood with legs forked wide, his broad white hat pushed back from his high forehead.

"Name's Job Warnock, sheriff, an old-time Arizona prospector, at your service. Just come down into these parts from up Yavapai way, where I've been diggin' holes in the hills for nigh on five years now, with nothin' much to show for it except a few no-account copper claims."

"I see," the sheriff said, with an audible snap of his undershot jaws. "That bunch o' burros back yon way belong to you?"

"Yes."

"Them two horses?" The sheriff's voice hardened.

"No."

"Then where did you get 'em?" The pointed question came swift, keen, and brittle.

For a long moment Job squinted his mild blue eyes up at him; then he answered in his usual slow, measured way: "I didn't get 'em, sheriff. They just drifted in some time last night—from I don't know where. I noticed 'em this mornin' when I looked up my burros. They seem to've been used real hard.

Sheriff Mason gave an abrupt nod. "I'd say real hard. They've been travelin' steady since night before last. They were stolen from the Sagetown livery stable—them and a saddle and bridle. The Sagetown bank was robbed the same night, and the feller used the horses to make his get-away. He corraled somethin' over twenty thousand dollars. Meanwhile he'd broke into old man Peter's store and taken a bunch o'

chuck, a pack saddle, a tarp, a length o' rope, and a little cookin' outfit. We've been trailin' him since yesterday mornin', and we'd have ketched up with him by midnight, if the snow hadn't covered up his tracks. By the way he was circlin' round, I sized it up that he was makin' for this part o' the Grahams, and I wasn't mistaken. He got a good ten hours' start on us, for the robberies wasn't discovered until yesterday mornin'."

He eyed Job keenly, as if to gauge the effect of his recital of the cumulative crimes; and, when he saw no expression of surprise on the immobile features, he wagged his head, as though satisfied with the result of his psychological test.

"Well! Well!" Job exclaimed in a tone that was utterly devoid of color.

"Well! Well!" the sheriff repeated after him, with a curl on his lips. "I see you've got a partner, feller." He waved a hand toward the two beds. "Where's he at?"

"Out looking for game," Job replied warily.

He winced under a sharp sting of conscience. Uncompromising truth was a vital tenet in his straight-laced creed. He held truth sacred above all things. It took precedence even over partnership loyalty. But he justified his dissembling with the unction that his reply was at least a half truth; for he knew that Harve had taken no supplies with him, and that the rifle would have to yield him food in his flight.

The sheriff's sharp eyes made a critical survey of the canvas-hidden pyramid. "Brand new tarp, I see," he remarked tersely. He lifted up a corner, gave the tarpaulin a quick flip to throw off the melting snow, and then tossed it back from the massed pile of supplies and camp stuff.

He stepped away a pace and swept a tragic gesture toward the revelation. "There it is, gents!" he flung out dramatically. "Look at it! Packsaddle—plumb new. That's the stuff that was high-graded from old man Peters' store." He advanced to the pile again and picked up a can of tomatoes. He examined the label, then with a nod let the can drop back. "I knowed all along that he had a pal waitin' for him som'ers." He turned to Job again. "Now where's that money, hombre? And where's your pal?" His tone cut like a whip's lash.

Job gulped hard. Harve Logan was his partner. Harve might forswear the faith; but could he, Job Warnock, violate the partners' code? Could he shield his partner and thus corrupt himself by abetting a crime?

He was not one to flinch an issue, and he was fully aware of his strict duty in the anomolous situation. Justice must be served, though the heavens fall; and in such a conflict he knew that it was his Spartan duty to weigh no individual tie against conscience and loyalty to the State. But when the individual was his partner of many camp fires, of years of patient plodding over the hills, one who had accepted more than his measure of labor and hardship, spreading comfort, healing wounds, even ready, if the call came, to risk his life for his companion of the trail, it somehow seemed different.

The inward conflict made tumult in his breast; it numbed him; the faces about him became a blur. He stared dully first at the exposed heap of stolen goods and then at his dying fire, which became to him now an emblem of the cold dishonor that had made bleak his camp. Each was the horn of the confounding dilemma that confronted him; and his hand remained paralyzed. Either contact would pull down damnation upon him.

"Well, what've you got to say, feller?" the sheriff demanded severely. "Where's that money? Who's your pal, and where's he at?"

Job jerked up his head, then squared his slack shoulders. "I can't tell you," he replied in a firm tone.

But he knew that his answer lacked finality. There was a halt in his voice. Its resolute ring was false, spurious.

He must have time to allay the inward storm which made turbid his beating thoughts. Anyhow, he contended within himself, the truth could avail nothing. These men would never believe the fantastic tale of the burro falling out of the night, with a pack of money on its back, and the subsequent flight of his partner with the treasure. So why bother to relate it?

"Oh, you can't tell me, eh?" the sheriff barked. "Well, you needn't. We savvy who your pal is, all right, and trust us to find him. He just got out of the pen a few days ago, and he'd had the nerve to come straight back to his former haunts and take up his old game. Nobody's seen him since they turned him loose up at Florence; but it was only natural that he'd make a break for these parts the very first thing to look up his cache."

"You mean—Colleen McGuire?" Job asked fatuously.

"Mighty innocent, ain't you?" the sheriff sneered.

Job drew himself up. "Yes, I'm mighty innocent, sheriff," he said deliberately and without emotion. "I've got a pal, all right, but he ain't Colleen. Fact is, me'n my pal was in the posse that captured Colleen round five years ago. We done our full share, too. We was the guides that trailed him and took the sheriff straight to the spot where the feller was hid out."

"You?" Sheriff Mason gave a jeering laugh. "I'll tell you plumb to your face, stranger, that you don't look good to me. If you was in this part o' the country at all five years ago, it's my guess that you could tell some mighty interestin' things about the way that pal o' Colleen's, Red Duncan, managed to slip out o' the country so slick. That's my opinion of you, feller. Well, we're wastin' time standin' here parleyin.' First thing we've got to have a bite o' breakfast; then we'll start in and turn these hills inside out. You said your name was—what, stranger?" he queried, as he stepped across and snapped the manacles on Job's wrists.

"Job Warnock."

"All right, Job Warnock. I've got to hold you; but, before I send you in I'm goin' to sweat it out of you how them horses and these things that was taken from old man Peters' store come to be in your hands. Get me?"

"You ain't goin' to sweat nothin' out o' me, sheriff," Job declared stubbornly.

But he was not defiant. Conscience kept harrying him with its pitiless chide. By his silence he was making himself an accessory to the crime, and meanwhile the stolen treasure was being carried farther and farther from its rightful owners. Every moment of inaction was lessening the chances of its recovery.

V.

Throughout all this inward struggle Job remained obdurate. His lips parted to speak no counsel. After the men had eaten their breakfast and had allowed the horses to graze on the dry grass for a while, he was placed in a saddle, and two of the deputies were detailed to take him to Sagetown. The other would remain in the Grahams and push the search for the bandit and his loot.

The sheriff had recited his careful instructions to Job's escort. Everything was made ready for the start. Job was indifferent to the cold grip about his wrists; he was not cowed by the sheriff's bluster, nor by the prospect of steel bars. But a revolt had been growing within him against himself for evading his hard duty. By his silence he was compounding a wrong, and the law of no vicarious brotherhood had the

right to impose such a demand upon him.

The reaction came with a swift decision. He straightened in the saddle. "Sheriff," he said; then his voice choked.

"Well, what now?" Sheriff Mason asked sharply.

Job fortified his will and looked the sheriff squarely in the eye. "Sheriff, I know you won't believe me——"

He was interrupted by the rattle of an avalanche of boulders that came tumbling down the cañon wall, followed in a moment by a snarling voice, which reached faintly to those below.

Instantly every eye was diverted upward and riveted upon that sullen mass of vapor. The watchers all knew that up there in the cloud were engulfed the principals in some frightful drama that was being enacted on that perilous stage, five hundred feet—six hundred feet, perhaps—above them.

There came another slide of boulders, accompanied by a prolonged shriek, as a figure plunged down out of the cloud. It fell upon a snow-covered catclaw, clung desperately for a struggling moment, then rolled down the wall for a distance of fifty feet or more, and finally found anchor against a friendly bush, where it lay motionless.

Scarcely had it come to repose, when two more figures, apparently at death grips, came out of the cloud and plumped with a soundless thud upon a narrow ledge which projected from the cañon wall and looked out upon a dizzy void that fell away to a drop of fully two hundred feet. Every man below held his breath, tense, eyes straining, horrified, momentarily expecting the death plunge; or, perhaps, death had already captured its pawn.

Job Warnock gave a deep groan. Watching, with every nerve keyed to the snapping point, he saw one of the fallen figures rise sluggishly. It was Harve Logan, massive, grizzled, looking like the statue of a heroic Greek god, as he stood motionless, in bold relief against the cañon wall, there on that high pedestal.

For a brief space Harve seemed dazed. His eyes dropped their gaze into the dizzy gulf which swept away from his feet. He recoiled and almost tripped over the still figure behind him. He stooped, took it up, and dragged it behind a catclaw. He jerked off his jumper and ripped it into ribbons. Then he quickly trussed up the inert form and lashed it to the bush.

His eyes turned down the wall. The man who was anchored precariously against the frail catclaw below was making a feeble effort to rise. Harve hurriedly let himself down, swinging from bush to rock, from rock to bush, reached the fellow, and took him in his great arms.

Twenty minutes later he was at the foot of the wall. Without so much as a glance at the men who crowded round him, he threw back the tarpaulin from his bed, dropped his burden upon the blanket, and made his swift examination.

"Feelin' all right, lad?" Gentleness crept into his gruff voice.

The pale lips trembled into a faint smile. "Fine and dandy!" came the brave reply.

Job, looking down from the saddle, saw great beads of perspiration ooze out on the young fellow's forehead. The youthful face, which bore the unmistakable prison pallor, twitched with the exquisite pain which he was unable to hide.

Harve rose. "You might as well know the true facts right off, kid." he said bluntly. "Your leg's broke square in two."

"I'm lucky," the young fellow said with a grim laugh. "It might have been my neck."

Harve turned to the men. "We've got to get him to a doctor right off, gents. One of you fellers hit the trail

for town, as fast as a horse can carry you, and send out an automobile to take him in."

"I'll take charge of him," the sheriff spoke up. "I know who the kid is, and I want him real bad. It's Colleen McGuire."

"You're right, partner." A wan smile played across Colleen's drawn, finely chiseled features.

"Come back to dig up your cache and take up your old line, did you, feller?" Sheriff Mason asked in a tone that was not without a mellow note of sympathy, despite the obvious accusation in the words.

"I've had enough, sheriff," said Colleen in a clear, feminine voice. "I came back to go straight—came back to dig up my cache, all right, but for the purpose of carrying the stuff to Sagetown and handing it over to the bank where it belongs. You may believe it or not, just as you please."

"Oh, I believe it, all right, kid," the sheriff said bluntly. "It all sounds real convincin', your returnin' the money and goin' straight, when the first thing you done was to hit up the bank for another haul o' twenty thousand or so."

"Shut up, will you?" Harve snapped testily. "Oh, I beg your pardon, feller. I reckon you're the sheriff."

"Correct, stranger."

"Then listen to me!" Harve lifted a big hand toward the cañon rim. "I've got Red Duncan hogged up tight up yander, and I'll go back and bring him down pronto. I reckon it's him you're wantin', and not Colleen."

"That other feller Red Duncan?" Sheriff Mason's eyes widened.

"That's what I said—Red Duncan. Seems like, from the talk I overheard between 'em up yander, that Red had seen it in the paper that Colleen was out. He sneaked back from across the border, where he's been holed up all this time, and was hangin' round this part o' the Grahams watchin' for Colleen, who, he was sure, would show up sooner or later to dig up his cache. I reckon Red must have got restless stickin' around, with nothin' to do, so he decided to get busy and touch up the bank for another little haul."

"It was Red done that—and not Colleen?" Sheriff Mason was now visibly excited.

Harve answered with a curt nod. "His swag rained down on me and my partner last night. It was all packed in a valise, and we stuck it under that canvas yander—sort o' keerless like. I woke up sometime in the night or early mornin', and it struck me that I ought to have took it to bed with me. I got up, and it had gone, valise and all, the whole business."

"Great guns!" Job gulped. "Why, man——"

Harve waved him to silence. "The feller that high-graded that bag o' yallerbacks hadn't beat me much, for the snow hadn't covered up his trail yet, and it was still snowin'. I dressed real quick, took my guns, and started after him. I ought to have told my partner, but he's such a cantankerous old fool that he'd have wanted to done the trailin' himself."

"Huh!" Job snorted. "Why, Harve, what——"

"Shut up!" Harve scolded. "I trailed the feller all night—up the wall and along them slippery rocks. Lots o' times I couldn't see two yards ahead o' me, and I'll say it was real scaly goin'. When daylight come, I was crawlin' along the edge o' the rim, up there in them clouds. Finally I heard talkin' just ahead o' me—right around a big rock. I stopped and listened. Seems like Colleen and Red had just come together at the mouth o' the little cave, where that old loot was cached out. I gathered from the talk that Red happened along just after Colleen had crawled out with his swag. The meetin' was accidental, the way I sized it up.

That right, lad?" He turned to Colleen.

"Yes," came the reply. "I reached the cave about two this morning. I took a sleep and was just ready to start on foot for Sagetown with my old loot, when Red came along."

"Red knowed what Colleen had, o' course, and he wanted a quick split right then and there, so he could move on," Harve continued. "Colleen wouldn't listen to it, and he sure talked turkey to Red. I heard him tell Red to keep his dirty hands off the money. Colleen didn't seem to know nothin' about the money in the bag Red was carryin' and Red kept real quiet on that p'int, o' course. Colleen told Red straight that he was goin' to take every dollar back to the bank. Then the fight started. I couldn't see it, but I knowed what was goin' on. I'd heard Colleen say that he didn't have no gun, and when the ruckus broke loose I jumped round the rock and took a hand, and I'd have been in time to save Colleen from goin' over if I hadn't tripped on that valise. Then me and Red mixed—but you fellers seen the best part o' that mix-up, I reckon."

"And the money?" Sheriff Mason asked in a dazed way.

"My cache is still up there," Colleen replied quickly.

"And so's the valise," said Harve. "I'll climb up and get the whole layout, after I bring Red down. He's got to come first, for I calc'late he's goin' to need consid'able patchin' up."

"Great guns!!"

Harve turned toward his gaping partner. It was the first time in all their years together that he had ever heard Job's voice rise out of its placid groove, and the unusual note in it startled him. Then for the first time he noticed the handcuffs on Job's wrists.

He turned angrily upon the sheriff. "What's the meanin' o' them links, sheriff—and him the squarest old fool that ever packed, or unpacked, a burro?"

"It was—why, I reckon it was a mistake, friend," the sheriff apologized. He crossed over and quickly removed the manacles.

Job swung down from the saddle, ambled across to Harve, and took both the big hands in his. "Well, you doggoned, long-haired old grizzly!" His voice was blurred, and great tears rolled down his weathered cheek. "Great guns, man, but you're some partner for a feller to tie to!"

WHEN A TOWN GOES FISHING

OUT in the Arizona Mountains the little town of Greer has learned to make the most of its opportunities. When the season for trout fishing opens, Greer sends out a general invitation to everybody to come to fish in its near-by sparkling streams.

This past year three hundred people heeded Greer's invitation and shared, under the most pleasing conditions, the delights of trout fishing. Before they left the little settlement, Greer had shown them everything of interest to be seen in the community, not neglecting to point out the fields and orchards in the immediate neighborhood.

Perhaps Greer might be said to be fishing, too, using trout for bait. But the example of a little town that capitalizes its resources and makes itself attractive to home-seekers is to be held up to other communities which fail to use their natural resources.

Pied Aim

By

Frank Richardson Pierce

Author of the "Flapjack Meehan," Stories etc.

THE snow had long since left the ridges and hillsides, but it still lay deep in the mountain depressions, where it had drifted the previous winter. Many tiny streams, fed by hanging glaciers and ice fields on the higher peaks, trickled downward like threads of silver on green cloth, carrying with them fine bits of gold and an occasional nugnet. The streams had found their way under the snow field, formed into a sizable creek that brawled its way through the big basin, and eventually found its way to the sea.

In the midst of the snow field, by some strange trick of the elements, stood an area of boulders and gravel, hidden from the prying eyes of those who chanced to pass through the basin. Scattered about were sluice boxes, picks, shovels, and the implements of placer mining. The "dead work" was behind, and the riffles in the sluice boxes had already yielded considerable gold.

Ogden straightened up slowly and pressed his hand against the small of his back. He was getting too old for this sort of thing, but it was the only work he knew, and unless he cleaned up this year, next year might see him in the miner's home at Sitka.

"We've struck a real pay stream," he muttered. "Struck it after thirty years of prospecting all over Alaska, always missing our luck by a margin. Guess we're safe enough, too. The few that know we're up here think we're sniping for wages. Huh!"

He stooped and rolled back a boulder. In a natural depression against solid rock was hidden several pokes of gold. "That means warm winters for 'Timid' Kenyon and me," he whispered. "We've found the end of the rainbow at last."

Once more he fell to shoveling gravel, but now there was the spring of youth in his effort, and presently he whistled a merry tune of another day.

High up on the mountain several pieces of ice suddenly stirred, slipping downward with increasing speed until, with a mad leap, the mass cleared the cliff and crashed below. Ogden's keen ear caught the warning rumble an instant too late. Sensing that there was no chance to flee, he flattened himself against the wall and waited, tense, but fearlessly.

"Timid's baking a pie," he muttered. "I smell it—blueberry——" The crashing of ice cut off his words. The next instant the prospector found himself jammed against the wall.

The nickname, "Timid," had not been given Kenyon in a spirit of contempt. He was a peaceful old chap, and, twenty-five years before, he had been a peaceful young chap. No one had ever succeeded in arousing him for the simple reason that his partner, Ogden, usually stepped in and finished what some tough customer tried to start with Kenyon. His critical eye and keen judgment had saved many a miner from being caught by a slide, or crushed by a cave-in. Hence, "Timid" Kenyon.

Timid watched a salmon leap a small waterfall and lie in a pool until joined by its mate.

"Just like pardners," he observed; "they're both going to die, but they're sticking to the end. God's better to Ogden and me; He's given us strength to keep at the work He laid out for us, then paid us with a pay streak when we deserved rest. Guess I'd better take that blueberry pie out of the oven. If I burn the blamed thing Ogden will take it out of my hide."

He entered the small cabin, built of small spruce logs, and removed a nicely browned pie from the oven. A gentle breeze wafted the odor of browned crust and sugary juice up the basin.

"Every bit as good as mother used to bake, even if I do say it myself," he announced. "Now, what's that!"

It was an exclamation rather than a query. Timid Kenyon knew instantly. For an old man he showed surprising speed as he hurried up the basin, scrambled up steps cut in snow so solid as to be almost ice, then looked down at where Ogden lay. Shattered blocks of ice told what had happened. More might come any moment, and more did come two minutes later, but Timid did not hesitate.

"Old-timer!" he whispered brokenly. "Old-timer! It's all my fault. You trusted in my judgment, and I failed you. You're going to live! You got to!"

More ice fell, shattering into bits that cut Timid's face from the force of the impact as the chunks hit the boulders. He examined his partner, half wishing a bit would strike him down also. Only the previous day he had climbed to the hanging glacier and carefully studied the ground. A couple of sticks of powder might have dislodged a few tons of ice and snow, but it seemed incredible that any of the mass would move of its own accord. He had moved several small blocks that seemed dangerous. For once in his life he had not lived up to his name of being excessively cautious, and it had cost him the best partner a man ever had.

Ice fell again as he carried the broken form to safety, but he ignored it. He left Ogden on the snow long enough to cut two poles and improvise a stretcher, then he returned and began the difficult task of dragging his partner to the cabin. He paused to rest but once; then he glanced up at the hanging glacier, a beautiful thing, gleaming in the sunlight, with delicate tints of blue and green.

"Can't see how it happened," he muttered. "But it happened."

On his bunk in the cabin Ogden opened his eyes and peered about, dazed. "S'long, Timid!" he whispered. "S'long, I'm taking a new trail, soon—alone, all alone, pardner!"

Timid Kenyon hurried to the bunk. "You're going to live, Ogden!" he cried. "We'll pull through this together as we have everything else."

"Kinda queer, but I don't want to live," sighed the injured man. "Just kinda numb and tired all over. The forks in the trail are just ahead; I'm going it alone. Gimme your hand. That's it! G'by!"

Timid clung desperately to his partner's hand as if to pull him back from the grave. Fate was cruel indeed to laugh at their efforts all these years, then mock them when fortune smiled. Timid's face was contorted from the

pain deep within him, worse than any physical pain.

"Old-timer!" he pleaded. "Fight! Fight! Fight! Like you used to. There's a lot of good going ahead of us; let's give it a try. No more cold winters, just sunshine and blueberry pie three times a day."

His eyes searched the placid face for signs of life. "You never did get enough pie, old-timer!"

Timid's lips worked strangely as the pain within deepened. Perhaps he was crazy, maybe just desperate. He scraped the crust from the top of the pie and sunk the spoon deep within. When it had filled with the juice, his trembling hand carried it to his partner's teeth, and soft cuss words fell from his lips as a bit spilled.

"Go way, I'm tired!" muttered the injured man, but he licked his lips, and presently his eyes flickered a trifle. "Y'old son of a gun," he whispered, "gimme some of the berries next time."

Tears were running down Timid's cheek; tears of joy, for he saw the strange thing known as life, the desire to live, sweep across Ogden's face like some beautiful light. "You always did hanker for blueberry pie," he said growlingly, to hide his emotion, "but I didn't think it'd act like good whisky."

"Something seemed to press on my head, but it's going away," said Ogden slowly. "And my leg—she's busted, I'm 'fraid."

"Don't worry! I set the leg while you was unconscious, so you wouldn't feel it so much. The head part worried me, and then when you wanted to quit and die I got plumb frantic—it wasn't like you, because you always was a wild cat when it came to fighting. Better take it easy!"

Timid fussed around the cabin, pretending to work, but keeping a wary eye on his partner, and with a blueberry pie within reach. Somehow he derived the same mental comfort from the pie that some patients derive from a glimpse of the doctor's little black bag. Most of the afternoon Timid spent making pies, as an excuse to be near his partner, and the pleasant odors served to keep Ogden's mind from his troubles.

"You'd better take a look at things," Ogden suggested late that afternoon. "The water's running pretty heavily and might carry our boxes away."

Timid nodded and placed a row of pies on a bench to cool. "I'll fix things up and be right back," he said.

Two figures crawled slowly along the face of the hanging glacier. Presently one swung nearer the edge of the sheer wall and looked down into the basin. The placer workings resembled a rough cup in the snow, from this elevation. The other man, bearded, powerful, cruel, watched his companion narrowly.

"Well?" he queried at last, "which one did we get?"

"We got Ogden, the wild cat of the pair," Blair replied. In strength and appearance he was a fitting companion for Crary, his partner. "If we had a little more ice near the edge I believe we could land Timid Kenyon the same way. He's working on the boxes now. Maybe we'd better take a shot at him, he's not dangerous!"

With a light line Crary secured the other's feet, then planted his own firmly, keeping the line tight about his waist. "Now take a good aim and let Timid have it," he directed. With deliberate preparation Blair aimed and fired. The whine of lead as it droned close to his bent back brought Timid up with a jerk; he whipped out his own weapon, something he had not done in a lifetime, and sought a human target. Lead splattered beside him as he fired at the head looking down upon him. He fired once, then went down in a heap, his weapon barking once more from the muscular contraction of his hand as he fell. Blair grinned cruelly.

"Pull me up, Crary, that finishes the

pair; we've got the basin to ourselves."

"Sure you got him?"

"Deader'n a doornail!"

An hour later the pair looked down upon their work with cold stares of approval. In the huge cup, with its walls of snow, rain drenched until they were of the consistency of ice, stood Blair and Crary. From one side the stream rushed, crossed the center, and vanished into a snow cavern on the other side. Crary nodded toward the cave.

"The stream will take care of this evidence," he said. They lifted the body from the boulders and dropped it into the stream, where it drifted slowly into the darkness, frequently grounding on the rock-strewn bed. Timid's holster and forty-four followed the owner. It would take a mighty late fall to melt the snow sufficiently to disclose what lay beneath.

From the moment they disposed of the body, the pair worked rapidly, robbing the sluice boxes first. Later they would force from Ogden's lips the location of the cache. Undoubtedly, they reasoned, it was in the cabin, but first their greedy natures demanded something tangible, something they could instantly lay hands on—gold. Perhaps they might decide to work the claim themselves if it proved rich enough. The days were long and the nights short, barely two hours of darkness, and they had plenty of time in which to accomplish their work.

It was the newly aroused fight in Timid Kenyon's system that caused him to slowly open his eyes and remain unafraid when he saw only darkness and felt himself pinned down by some tremendous weight. His legs were free, and one arm, but he was wet from snow water and nearly helpless from the cold. Slowly he comprehended his position. He had been thrown into the stream. and his body had drifted through the snow tunnel until it lodged between boulders and snow. He squirmed free and made his way with the water downstream, by contact, cruel and abrupt at first, then by faint light as he neared the opening. There was something wrong with his head, but he understood—the bullet had struck him there, glanced, furrowed his shoulder, and splattered against a rock. The ice and cold water had stopped the flow of his wounds. He crawled to a black rock, where the sun was hot, and thawed out. There was much to be done, but first he must regain a measure of strength, and as he rested he thought out a plan in detail.

Timid Kenyon would never have admitted it, but he was quite a thinker. He knew about what was going on at the claim, and his only fear was for Ogden's safety. First he crawled through the underbrush to a powder cache. He selected two sticks and a length of fuse, fitted one end to a cap, and slowly made his way up the mountain. Once he worked onto a ledge and peered down. The two men were working desperately in an effort to accomplish as much as possible in a minimum of time. Grunting in satisfaction, Timid made his way up an icy slope, then crawled around a shoulder of ice. As he loaded the powder into a crack he considered each subsequent move, then applied the match. Briefly he observed the spluttering fuse, then he made his way around the shoulder, and slid to safety.

He was panting, and his shoulder pained him considerably as he waited for the shock that told of the explosion. There would be no loud report; just a sullen jar, and then an avalanche of ice into the valley. Suddenly he leaped to his feet. A solitary figure was moving swiftly down the basin—a dot in the distance.

"One of 'em got away," he cried,

"and he's heading for the cabin. I figured on their greed to get both of 'em the way they got Ogden."

He was nearly exhausted, but he fairly ran down the slope.

Old man Ogden realized that he and his partner were getting old. It came to him as he sat, propped up in his bunk, with a blueberry pie in his lap. It had taken Timid far longer than necessary to do the work incident to diverting a stream of water.

"Allowing an hour for the work and another hour to make the round trip from the cabin," Ogden estimated, "he should have been back here five hours ago. Maybe the stream got away, and maybe he got hurt—no, he wouldn't get hurt, he's too cautious. Still, I got it, and Timid had examined the ice up there and said it wouldn't slip down for a couple of months. Hello, here he comes now."

The step was slow, plodding; then silence.

"Hello, Timid, what's the matter—hurt?"

"No," came the answer, "get up your hands!"

Crary's gun came around the door an instant before his evil face peered at the injured man.

"I can get one arm up, Crary," answered Ogden, "but the other's helpless. Where's Timid?"

"Dead. Tucked away under the ice up at the claim!"

The cabin shook, and from the distance came the thunder of a slide. The men exchanged glances. Another slide, was the thought of each. Crary repressed a smile. If the slide had caught Blair, so much the better. It made his own course easier.

"Timid's dead, eh?" Ogden broke the silence. He had always taken a chance, and could well afford to take another. He had everything to gain and nothing to lose. Besides, Timid must be avenged. Crary's automatic pistol was covering him steadily, however.

"Have a pie, Crary," he said suddenly, jerking his head toward the row of pies on the bench. For the fraction of a second Crary's glance wavered. Food had been none too good with him lately, and he had not tasted blueberry pie this year, but he was no fool to be caught off guard.

"Have a pie!" Ogden's supposedly bad arm suddenly hurled the pie he held in his lap. Straight and true it splashed, and broke across Crary's face. A pie hurler in slapstick comedy could not have done better. But this was no comedy. It was a matter of life and death. Crary brushed his hand frantically across his eyes to wipe away the juice, his automatic spitting viciously. He was in a panic, for the old man in the bunk might find his own weapon. And sure enough, when his vision cleared it was to see a battered forty-four in a gnarled fist.

"Drop it!" cried Ogden, giving Crary a chance he did not deserve.

Crary's quick eye took in the situation instantly. A man could not shoot from that angle. He swung about like a flash, and the old man did shoot from that seemingly impossible angle. Crary sprawled to the floor and remained silent.

Ogden regarded his markmanship with interest. "A number of good men fell before your aim," he commented, "but somehow you got out of it. Still, you're better off than I am with a dead pardner and me helpless."

Hurrying footsteps caused old man Ogden to cover the door with his forty-four. Men like Crary frequently traveled in pairs.

Timid Kenyon felt his legs giving away beneath his weight as he entered the cabin. "I heard the shootin' and figured Crary had finished you," he panted. "Came here to go after him barehanded. How'd you do it?"

"Remember the old Western trick of blowing tobacco in a man's eyes? Well, I figured a pie would turn the trick, and I let him have it!"

"There's tons of snow and ice covering the claim, but the gold's there, and the snow will melt and wash away. We'll just set tight while we get well. We'll eat pie in chunks, and, come fall, we'll clean up and take the trail south together."

"We sure will, Timid," agreed Ogden. "Just as soon as you catch your breath and drag that cuss out, cut me a wedge o' that blueberry pie. I'm feeling kind o' faint."

THE WILD WEST CARNIVAL AT CHEYENNE

DURING the third week of July the annual Frontier Days Celebration was held at Cheyenne, Wyoming, for the twenty-seventh time. This cowboy festival of international fame affords a striking pageant of the West, from the days of the '40's and '50's, when immigrant trains dared the peril of Indian attacks, down to the present day, when punchers still break bronchos and lasso cattle in the approved style of the classic cowboy tradition.

This great spectacle is the oldest of the wild-West rodeos that are now held in various parts of the West. Fifty thousand dollars in prizes were offered this year for the winners in the world's championship broncho busting, steer roping, steer bulldogging, and other cowboy sports. Punchers were present from every country of America where ranching is followed.

Frontier Days was originated by F. W. Angier, a railroad passenger agent, who in 1897 was sent out to get orders for his employer. While waiting for a train at a wayside Wyoming station his attention was aroused by the efforts of a group of cowboys to get an untamed broncho into a cattle car. As he watched the tremendous struggles of the daring beast and saw the skill and courage of the wranglers, the spectacle struck him as a thing unique and one which would interest people. Accordingly he decided to arrange a multiplied performance of this character, where people could see cowboys and bronchos in action. Cheyenne, the capital of the cow country, was chosen as the logical place for the spectacle.

The first Frontier Days Celebration was a success, and from this one-day show has grown the now famous annual exhibition which sometimes lasts a week. It is a purely public enterprise, unassociated with private gain. The proceeds, if any, are devoted to civic improvements in Cheyenne. The "show" is held in a public park, with seating accommodations for twenty-five thousand spectators and arena-edged accommodations for twenty-five thousand more. There are stable and corral provisions for five hundred horses and two hundred steers. Adjoining the park is a public camping ground, where more than five thousand automobile camping outfits can be parked.

The earlier shows attracted ropers and riders from only Wyoming and near-by Colorado regions, but to-day it is the mecca for the premier performers of wild-West stunts from every cattle-raising section of the nation. Indians were brought from two reservations and United States cavalry, artillery, and infantry engaged in a sham battle with the Reds.

Our Western States

Nebraska, The Tree Planter State

By E. T. Wilson

ON his famous quest for the Seven Cities of Cibola, Coronado is said to have journeyed as far as the southern boundary of the present State of Nebraska. There are vague stories of other early Spanish explorations in the region, but we know little of them.

Marquette, the French explorer, passed the mouth of the Missouri River in 1673 and, relying on stories told by the Indians, marked the Platte River.

As part of the Louisiana Province, the region now Nebraska was under French rule in 1682; in 1763 the Spanish held sway over it; once more, in 1801, it fell to the French. Two years later the United States gained possession of it as part of the Louisiana Purchase.

Lewis and Clark, Virginians, skirted the eastern boundary of the State in 1804-1805. In the diary of the two explorers they tell of the wild plums and cherries which were so plentiful there, of the grass which was taller than a man's head, of the abundance and variety of game to be found.

A wealthy Spaniard, Manuel Lisa, reached the country north of the Platte River in 1805, and founded the first known Nebraska settlement on the site of what is now Bellevue. Pierre and August Chouteau, fur traders, journeyed as far as the Platte in 1807. In 1810 a post was opened at Bellevue by the American Fur Company; to this settlement Indians for hundreds of miles around brought their furs to dispose of them.

Major Long's expedition in 1819 was the first to ascend the Platte from its mouth to the confluence of its two branches. Fort Atkinson was established that year, to be abandoned eight years later. A trading post was set up at Omaha in 1825, and the following year another at Nebraska City. By an act of Congress in 1834, Nebraska became the "Indian Country," and many tribes of Eastern Indians were transferred to it.

Because of its central location the territory was a crossing ground for fur traders, explorers, Mormons, and gold seekers on their way to the Pacific and Rocky Mountain States. Some of the pioneers stopped on the way, defying the law which forbade whites to settle among the Indians.

The Mormons, while preparing to cross the plains to Utah, passed a winter in Nebraska, about six miles north of Omaha. They lived in log cabins and dugouts, and in the spring of 1847 the

first party of one hundred and fifty set out for the Great Salt Lake.

Hordes of gold hunters and pioneers crossed the region in 1849-50 over the Old Oregon Trail. At Hebron, Nebraska, a monument marks a point in the trail with this inscription:

"Oregon Trail from Independence and Westport (Kansas City), Missouri, to the Columbia River, route trail of the trappers and traders as early as 1830. A main road to the gold fields and Western military posts. The path of the Pony Express and Overland Stage, gradually superceded by railroads throughout its course."

Immigrants on the old trail often had to stop while vast herds of buffalo swept across their way.

While "Buffalo Bill" was born in Iowa, Nebraskans feel they have some claim to him, too. North Platte, Nebraska, was one of his homes; there on his ranch, "Scout's Rest," he kept many of his show animals. It was at Omaha that Colonel Cody opened his Wild West Show.

In 1850 a military road was established from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to Fort Kearney on the Platte. A few years later steamboats were traveling up and down the Missouri River.

Nebraska Territory was established in 1854. It extended from the fortieth parallel, which is its present southern boundary, to Canada on the north, and westward to the Rocky Mountains from the Missouri River. Francis Burt was the first territorial governor. In 1861 all the region north of the forty-third parallel was made part of Dakota Territory. At the same time a small part from the southwest was added to Colorado, and the western boundary of the territory was extended to the one hundred and tenth meridian. In 1863 Idaho Territory was created from the northwest portion of Nebraska.

In 1867 Nebraska became a State with its present boundaries except for a slight addition in the northwest in 1882. David Butler was the first State governor. The Honorable C. W. Bryan is the present governor. The State motto is: "Equality Before the Law." The golden rod, which blooms in such profusion in Nebraskan fields, is the State flower.

The popular title of the "Tree Planter" State was given Nebraska because the people there have planted so many trees in their wasteland and prairie regions. Arbor Day, which now has widespread observation, was set apart first by that State in an effort to stimulate the interest of the public in augmenting the woodlands there. The word Nebraska is of Indian derivation; it means "shallow water," and redmen used it to describe the Platte River.

Nebraska is situated in the Great Plains region at the base of the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains. Its northern boundary is formed by South Dakota; east of the State are Iowa and Missouri; Kansas and Colorado form its southern boundary, while on the west are Colorado and Wyoming. In size it ranks fifteenth among the States, with an area of 77,520 square miles. Its population of 1,296,370 places it thirty-first in rank in that respect.

Richardson County, in the southeast corner, is the lowest part of Nebraska; it is 850 feet above sea level. Points in Banner and Kimball counties, near the Wyoming border, are over 5,000 feet in altitude.

There are four distinct physical regions in the State: the Loess Region, the Sand Hills, the High Plains, and the Bad Lands. The Loess area covers the southeast section of Nebraska; the Sand Hills occupy the central and west-central part; the High Plains—or short-grass country—increase in height in the western part of the State; the Bad Lands are in its northwest corner.

The Loess Region is the most important agriculturally in the State. The

soil there belongs to the kind that is regarded as the most productive in the world. It is deep, easily tilled, and so compact that the early pioneers often made good wells fifty to sixty feet deep, using practically no brick facing. Cellars dug in the close soil many years ago, without the use of either brick or cement, are still in good condition.

Soil of the Sand Hills country also is fine grained, but not adapted to agriculture.

Sod houses are still in use in that region and in the High Plains country. In counties in the west and northwest, where timber is scarce and difficult to transport, these rude houses are used both for schools and dwellings. Some of them are made entirely of sod and a few saplings; others have shingled roofs and wooden window and door facings. The sod used is durable, having embodied in it tough roots of prairie grass. It is cut into large-sized blocks, so that the walls of houses made from it are stable. There is little rainfall in these sections to harm such structures, and many a traveler over the plains seeks refuge from the sun in the humble but hospitable abodes.

The Bad Lands, which occupy the northwest corner of Nebraska, are an extension of the South Dakota Bad Lands. They are irregular patches of clay and marl, which occur in the midst of green prairies. The barren nature of these Bad Lands is due to heavy rains which pour furiously down steep mountain sides and wash top soil and clay away; the wear and tear by erosion is so great in the Bad Lands that no plant gets a foothold there.

Until recently few travelers ventured into this dry, seamed region. It is extremely hot, and the reflection of light from the clays is very hard on eyes unaccustomed to the glare. There are no springs or streams, so drinking water and that used for cooking must be taken from standing pools; these are sometimes unfit or even dangerous to drink.

The quality of the soil in the Bad Lands is not responsible for their name. The stable soil is really fertile; and some fine grazing lands are found in the region. There are farms, too, which respond readily to cultivation. The name Bad Lands was given to this section of the country because the terrain was so uneven as to be impassable for wagons. The barren Bad Lands alternate with grass-covered prairie; the entire region would be fertile if the soil were not being swept away year after year.

A harmonious and beautiful effect is produced by the varied layers of colored clays and sands in the Bad Lands. Purples blend with lilac and lavender, and reds, greens, and yellows—yellow is the dominating color of the region.

An ancient lake, of the tertiary period, once covered parts of the Dakotas, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Colorado, until sands and clays gradually filled it. Strange animals roamed the lake borders in search of food and drink. Their bodies floated down the current and their bones were buried in the bed of the immense lake with the sediment carried there.

On the Cook Ranch, in Sioux County, Nebraska, a very valuable fossil bed is located. The Niobrara River, which runs through the ranch, has cut a valley, leaving two hills, the bases of which contain many bones. Ancestors of the modern horse, as well as those of the cat and lion, have been found in this bone field, and a very valuable fossil specimen of the giant hog. Paleontologists say that prehistoric elephants, both mastodons and mammoths, once roamed Nebraska in great numbers.

Important mineral products of the State are potash, clay, pumice, sand, gravel, ochre, peat, and lignite.

Nebraska is drained entirely by the Missouri River, and tributaries of it. The more important of these are the

Platte, in the central part of the State, the Republican in the south, and the Niobrara in the north. The scenery along the Niobrara River cañon is very picturesque.

There are few clouds in Nebraskan skies. Although summer days are hot the nights are pleasant. In some sections the winters are severe. Sometimes a blizzard from the northwest strikes the State, and works havoc among the cattle herds on the open plains. The western part of Nebraska is arid, but in the eastern section there is enough rainfall for agriculture.

Indeed, Nebraska is one of our most important agricultural States. A large quantity of corn is raised there, and wheat, hay, oats, rye, alfalfa, and potatoes are also produced. The growing of sugar beets has become an active industry, while apples, pears, nectarines, peaces, cherries, and grapes flourish in Nebraskan orchards. Strawberries are the chief of the small fruits.

Cattle find abundant pasturage on the great grassy prairies of the Tree Planter State. In western Nebraska great numbers are raised for market. Dairying is actively engaged in; horses and swine are also bred there.

It was in the autumn of 1866 that two teams of oxen-drawn trains engaged in freighting goods from the Missouri to mountain points, were halted in their progress because of snow on the plains of western Nebraska. The drivers abandoned the hope of getting their cargo to its destination before the winter. They stored their wagons as well as possible, turned the oxen loose, and rode their horses back to the border. In the spring when they returned they expected to find the bones of their oxen strewn on the plain. To their surprise the animals were not only alive, but sleek and fat.

This experience was significant; from it sprang a new industry. By the next autumn wintering cattle crowded the northern plains. The cow country came into existence.

The cow country stretched from the Texas River to Manitoba. Every year more steers from Texas herds were driven north. Early in May the owners held their big round-up. The cowboys drove the bulls, steers, cows, new calves to a fixed meeting place. Here the cattle were sorted out by brands. The young ones could be identified by their mothers. Those born since the previous spring, and too old to keep close to their mothers, formed a class of "mavericks." They were divided according to rule. When the cattle were branded the yearling steers were separated from the rest and started up the trail to Nebraska, Wyoming, and Dakota. The others were turned loose on the plains or Texas or Indian Territory. Late in autumn herds began to arrive at their northern rendezvous. Ogallala, Nebraska, was the first great center, and for many miles around this cow town there were ranches. From the business of wintering cattle the northern ranchers soon took the further step of breeding their own stock.

Indians on Nebraskan reservations consist chiefly of members of the Sante Sioux, Winnebago, and Ponca tribes.

Most of the State's people live in southern and eastern counties; the arid western section is sparsely settled.

Omaha is the largest city in the State, and one of the gateways to the West. The city takes its name from the Indian word Omaha, meaning "upstream."

Lincoln is the capital of Nebraska and the seat of the State University. At South Omaha are great stockyards and packing houses. Grand Island and Hastings are other important cities of Nebraska.

Ghost Fox of Shadow Valley

By Reginald C. Barker

Author of "The Lie 'Red' Shanan Told," "Back o' Beyond," etc.

TWICE Jim Donohue had stepped to the door of the cabin and gazed earnestly at the far-flung summits of the Crater Range. Twice he had reëntered the cabin and set the baked beans on the little hewn table; only, each time, to return them to the oven. For Jim Donohue was uneasy; night was fast shrouding the white capped peaks, and his partner had not returned from the trap line.

"Bet Len has gone and broke his leg or got in the way of a snowslide," grumbled the old trapper. "Just my luck to have to go and hunt him up, and maybe pack him into camp on my back."

A third time Jim Donohue started to go outside, but before he reached the door it was flung open and Len Garrick, bowlegs, snowshoes, and all, shuffled into the warmth of the log cabin.

"Huh! reg'lar night hawk, ain't you?" greeted Jim.

Len Garrick only grunted as he bent to remove the web snowshoes from his feet. Then he threw off his pack and his Mackinaw and glanced meaningly at the baked beans, dimly seen in the dark recess of the oven.

His partner took the hint and forbore asking any questions, for he knew that there are days when the trap line tries the temper of the best of men.

Filled with warm food and hot coffee, Len Garrick sat down on the edge of the double bunk and thoughtfully scraped out the bowl of his pipe. Jim Donohue cleared the little table of dishes and began to wash them.

"Any luck to-day, Len?" he asked, at last.

"Middlin'," answered his partner, and motioned with his pipe at the pack on the floor.

There were two marten in the pack; beautiful, dark-furred creatures with silvery heads and orange-colored throats. Jim Donohue hung them upon a nail in a rafter, where they would thaw out by degrees.

"Twenty-five bucks apiece," estimated the older man; "that's not so bad for a short gulchlike Bonanza."

Len Garrick only grunted noncommittally.

"What's biting you, old-timer?" demanded his partner at last. "Seen a ghost on the trail?"

"I don't know, Jim," was the startling reply, "whether I did or not."

Jim Donohue had spent thirty years on the trap line, so he did not even smile; he knew the Crater Range, with its silence and its mystery, too well.

"D'you mind the place where we caught the silver fox, Jim?" asked Len Garrick.

"Uh-huh, Boulder Ridge, we named it, Len; though there ain't no boulders since the deep snow came—not as one would notice, anyhow."

"Well," said Len, "I saw it there."

"Saw *what* there?"

"I saw the ghost of the silver fox we caught," asserted Len Garrick, as he removed his pipe from his mouth. "And it was white as the drifted snow."

"Must have been a snowshoe rabbit," scoffed Jim Donohue.

"No," denied Len Garrick soberly; "it was a fox, a beautiful, snow-white fox, with a big bushy tail like that of the silver gray we caught. Only the tail, too, was white as the drifted snow."

"There are no white foxes this side of Alaska," said Jim Donohue, "and even if it was one, you could have shot it, Len."

"Too far off," explained Len. "I was bending over a trap when I heard it bark —you know the short, snappy bark a fox gives, Jim—and I looked up. Just then it barked again, and I saw it. High on a wind-swept chimney of granite he stood, outlined against the sky. I could see his sharp-pointed ears and curved bushy tail, and, as I told you, Jim, he was whiter than the snow. If it wasn't the ghost of our silver gray what was it?"

"Did you say you could see the curved, bushy tail of the critter, Len?" asked his partner.

"I sure did, partner; the sky was clear, and he was outlined against it."

"If we hadn't been partners so long, Len," said the older man, "I'd say you'd been dreaming. Anyhow, whatever it was, it was not a fox, that is, unless it's different from any fox I ever saw."

"How do you mean—different?" asked Len.

"Did you ever see a fox with a curved tail, Len?" asked the old trapper. "I never did, and I've trapped a many of 'em. All the foxes I ever saw carried their tails hanging straight down."

"I guess you're right about that, Jim," acknowledged Len Garrick, after a moment's thought. "But what I want to know is, if it wasn't a fox, what was it?"

"Did you find its tracks?" asked Jim Donohue.

"That's what made me so late," explained his partner. "I spent an hour climbing up to the place where I had seen it standing, but when I reached there I found that the snow had been blown off the rocks; and as it was beginning to get dark I had to give up the search and get back to camp. No, Jim, there were no tracks among the boulders of that wind-swept ridge."

"We'll find 'em in the morning," asserted Jim Donohue, "if we have to comb the Crater Range."

"Ghosts don't leave any tracks, Jim," asserted his partner superstitiously. Then, suddenly, he stiffened to attention. "Listen!" he exclaimed. "Did you ever hear the likes of that?"

From far away in the timber there came to the ears of the partners a long, low, ululating howl.

"It's not natural for any living animal to howl like that," said Len Garrick, shuddering. "It's a sign that something is going to happen to one or both of us."

"That wasn't the bark of a fox; neither red, white, nor black," agreed the old trapper; "but whatever made it isn't going to drive us off our trapping grounds, not if Jim Donohue can help it." And he stepped to the door and, flinging it open, stood looking out into the night.

Above the sharply defined peaks of the Crater Range there hung a full moon that was hidden at intervals by masses of scurrying cloud. Massed in battalions upon the side of the mountain below the cabin, the pines were whis-

pering among themselves of the storm to come.

"There'll be no tracks come morning," prophesied the old trapper, as he entered the cabin and closed the door.

Far up among the peaks something howled again, mournfully, insistently.

That night the worst storm of the winter struck the Crater Range, and for three days the partners were confined to the cabin, where they whiled the time away playing solitaire, mending snowshoes, and doing little jobs that they had neglected during the fine weather.

Upon the morning of the fourth day they started to examine the trap line that stretched from the headwaters of Loon Laugh Creek, fifty miles southward, to the base of Windy Mountain.

Night found them camped among the pines at the mouth of Loon Laugh Creek. Over a blazing fire they talked the matter over. Something had to be done, but what? For, of the fifty traps they had dug out of the snow, three had made a catch before the storm. But in every case the fur had been jerked out of the trap by some animal that had left in the snow tracks resembling those of a fox.

"Ghosts don't leave tracks," was the verdict of Jim Donohue; "and ghosts don't rob traps."

"If it wasn't a white fox, and if it wasn't the ghost of our silver gray, what was it?" asked Len insistently.

"I don't know any more than you do, Len," answered his partner, "but I do know that it wasn't a fox, for the tracks are a little different from all the fox tracks I have seen. Did you notice that it so happened that each of the traps robbed had contained a marten?"

"What has that to do with it?" asked his partner.

"Well," answered Jim Donohue slowly, "a marten don't take so very much killing; I was just wondering what would have happened if there had been a live lynx in one of the traps."

"It wouldn't have made a bit of difference," stated his partner obstinately. The ghost fox would have got away with it, anyhow."

But Jim Donohue shook his head, unconvinced. "Guess to-morrow we'll follow our line to the end," he said, "and see whatever is to be seen."

Shortly after dawn they found a great gray lynx in a trap. It was alive and unharmed, but all around the trapped animal the snow was packed down with the prints of foxlike feet.

"If I had ever seen such an animal," observed Jim Donohue, "I'd say our trap line was being robbed by a white wolverine, but yet it couldn't be that, for those tracks were never made by a wolverine."

"Best thing we can do is to pull stakes and change our range," suggested Len Garrick.

"Yeh!" exclaimed Jim Donohue derisively; "we'd play hob changing our range in six feet of snow, wouldn't we? No, Len, we'll follow the tracks of your 'ghost fox' until they stop."

All that day, from trap to trap, the partners followed the tracks of the unknown animal. Wherever a marten had been caught, it had been jerked out of the trap by the marauder; but the great gray lynx and a porcupine that had loafed its way into a trap had been left unmolested.

"Queer that the critter never swerved from the trap line," said Jim Donohue. "Almost seems like it had a definite point in view."

When the partners reached the end of their trap line at the base of Windy Mountain, they saw, in the snow ahead of them, a beaten path that looked as though the strange animal had traveled over it many times. Straight over the summit of Windy Mountain they followed the trail. Suddenly Jim Donohue, who was in the lead, stopped.

"Look, Len!" he exclaimed, as he pointed down the side of the mountain. "There's been a snowslide down there."

As his partner's eyes, younger by twenty years than those of Jim Donohue, followed the pointing finger, he gave an exclamation of surprise in which was mingled horror.

Sticking out of the snowslide was a pole such as is used by a man riding ski. And, straight down the side of Windy Mountain, the tiny tracks of Len Garrick's ghost fox led to where the pole stuck out of the snow.

"If he was caught by the slide," said Jim Donohue, "it would do no good to dig him out. We'd best leave him there until spring."

Around the pole were marks and tracks as though an animal had lain there in the snow.

"I didn't know there was any one within a hundred miles," said Len Garrick. "Who do you suppose it could have been?"

"Some poor devil must have established a trapping camp on this side of Windy Mountain," surmised Jim Donohue. "You know, Len, this is the first time we have crossed the summit this winter."

"She slipped before the storm," said Len Garrick, alluding to the slide. "See the new snow on top?"

The short winter's day had come to a close, and dusk was falling as the partners entered the serried ranks of pines that covered the flat country that bordered Ragged River. There they built a fire and camped. As they sat smoking around the blazing fire there came to their ears, out of the forest surrounding them, a series of short, snappy barks similar to those made by a fox. Then silence ensued, and, unseen, unheard by the two trappers, a short-legged, snow-white animal with pointed ears and a curved, bushy tail, slipped past their camp fire in the pines.

In the clear blue cold of a winter's dawn the partners broke camp, doggedly determined to follow to its end what Len Garrick persisted in calling "the ghost trail."

Mile after mile the tiny foxlike tracks led them down Ragged River, and at noon they reached a vast, snow-covered cedar swamp, known as Shadow Valley. There, in the heart of the silent swamp, abode of wild cat, bear, and wolverine, they came upon trees that had recently been blazed with an ax, sure indication that man had passed that way. The signs were unmistakable.

"I've a notion that we are nearing the end of your ghost trail," said Jim Donohue. "I wonder what we'll find."

"There's an old, deserted cabin somewhere in Shadow Valley," said Len Garrick reminiscently.

"I've heard tell as how three years ago two partners built it for a trapping cabin. One day they quarreled, and Jack Lyons killed his partner for the sake of the furs they'd caught. Leastways, that's how the story goes."

"Seems to me that I heard something about it, too," answered Jim Donohue. "Jack Lyons got clear out of the country, didn't he, Len?"

"No," stated Len Garrick soberly, "he never got out of Shadow Valley. A prospector found him the following spring: he had stepped into a bear trap supposed to have been set by the man he killed. It kind of gave Shadow Valley a bad name—sort of hoodooed it. So far as I know nobody has lived in the old cabin since Jack Lyons killed his pard."

Jim Donohue pointed ahead, where dimly seen between the shrouding cedars was the snow-covered roof of a low log cabin.

"There's some one living in it now," he said. "See the smoke coming from the stovepipe?"

And, winding ahead of the partners, between the cedars, the ghost trail led them to the cabin door. Fifty yards

from the cabin Jim Donohue cupped his hands to his lips.

"Hello, the house!" he shouted: "hal-loo-oo!"

The door of the cabin was flung open, and there stepped out before the astonished partners—a girl! A girl in a shirt of snow-white doeskin, and short skirt of the same material, beautifully made and fringed.

"Thank God!" she cried. "Thank God you've come!"

The partners removed their fur caps. "Need'n' help, ma'am?" asked Jim Donohue.

"Come in," she said briefly, "and see."

Lying upon a bunk in the cabin was a man, an old man. He was tossing in delirium.

"My father," said the girl simply. "He was run down by a snowslide on Windy Mountain, and crawled ten miles through the snow with one leg broken below the knee."

"Trapping?" inquired Jim Donohue, as he bent above the injured man.

"Partly," the girl answered. "But —my name is Mary Lyons. Word reached dad while we were in Alaska that my brother, Jack, had disappeared in the Crater Range. Dad and I were brokenhearted, and dad insisted that we should come here and try to find out what had become of him."

Jim Donohue did not at once reply. He was examining the broken leg of the gray-haired man lying upon the bunk. At last Jim Donohue straightened up. His face wore a serious expression.

"Gangrene has set in, Miss Lyons," he announced. "There is only one thing to be done. It is a slim chance, but we may save him."

"I've known the Long Trail since I was a child," said Mary Lyons, "and I know the toll it sometimes takes. Save him if you can."

"It's a hundred miles to the nearest surgeon," evaded Jim Donohue.

"You mean dad must lose his foot?" she asked, with steady gray eyes.

"And there is only me and my partner to do it," added Jim Donohue gently. Then his eyes wandered for a moment to the rafters, from which there hung the stretched skins of a dozen orange-throated, silver-faced pine marten.

"You'd better run down your trap line for a while, Miss Lyons," suggested the old trapper. "You see there is work to be done, and we have no chloroform."

"My place is with dad," she answered firmly. "You'll need hot water and towels."

Perhaps it was the mountain air, perhaps it was the rugged constitution won in forty years on the Long Trail; but it is more than likely that Mary Lyons was right when she claimed that it was Providence, aided by Jim Donohue and his pard, that pulled her father through. For the crude operation, performed with a sterilized, sharp hunting knife, was successful, and with the arteries tied and the leg bandaged, at last the old man fell into uneasy sleep that gradually became calm.

Then, and not until then, womanlike, Mary Lyons collapsed into the arms of Len Garrick.

"We'll have to make a hand sled and haul your father out to the nearest doctor, in a few days," said Jim Donohue, as soon as the girl had recovered from her swoom.

"A hundred miles!"

"That's easy," said Len Garrick. "It's a downstream trail."

"We might hitch up the Ghost," suggested Mary Lyons; "he's pulled on a sled before."

"The 'Ghost'!" exclaimed the partners in unison.

"Dad's dog," explained Mary Lyons. "The Ghost is the most wonderful dog you ever saw. Dad has had him for years; bought him from an Innuit, in Alaska. The Ghost was trained by the Indian to follow a trap line and dig the

marten out of the snow after every storm."

"What breed of dog is this Ghost?" asked Jim Donohue curiously.

"He is a cross between a white Arctic fox and an Alaskan husky," explained Mary Lyons. "Dad named him the Ghost because he is as white as snow."

"I'd sure like to own a dog like that," said the old trapper. "Where is he now?"

"The Ghost ought to be back at any moment," said Mary Lyons; "he's been gone all night."

Suddenly the girl turned, for a scratching was heard at the door of the cabin. She flung it open.

Before the eyes of the astonished partners there trotted into the cabin a beautiful, short-legged, snow-white dog, somewhat larger than a fox, with sharply pointed ears and a curved and bushy tail. Between his jaws the Ghost carried the frozen body of a pine marten.

"I always told you, "said Len Garrick to his partner, "that those tracks were made by a ghost fox!"

Mary Lyons took the marten from the jaws of the Ghost, and for a moment petted him.

"That makes fourteen marten the Ghost has taken from the traps since the great storm," she said. "There must have been quite a run."

Jim Donohue started to reply, but Len Garrick took the words out of his mouth. "Yes," said Len Garrick, "there must have been quite a run of marten; sometimes there is, and again sometimes there ain't."

A week later, when one night the father of Mary Lyons lay propped on a bed of cedar boughs before a blazing campfire, the partners told him and Mary that the Long Trail had claimed Jack Lyons, but of what he had been believed guilty, they said no word, for, as Jim Donohue remarked some time afterward, "that would have done no good."

Lying upon a couch in the little hotel at Tamarack, the father of Mary Lyons placed his hands in those of Jim Donohue and Len Garrick; then he pointed to the Ghost, lying sleeping upon the foot of the couch.

"I'll need him no more," said the old man, as he glanced at his bandaged foot; "my days on the Long Trail are over."

"But how about Mary?" asked Len Garrick.

For a moment the gray eyes of the girl met the brown ones of the young trapper.

Then:

"I'll bring the Ghost to see you when we come back in the spring, Mary," promised Len Garrick. "And maybe, too, some day you and I will meet again on the Long Trail; the trail that is always new!"

"Aye, Len," answered Mary Lyons; "the Long Trail that is always new—and yet how old."

And for a long time Mary Lyons stood watching the partners as they and the ghost fox of Shadow Valley once more turned their faces toward the mystic peaks of the Crater Range. At last she was rewarded: Len Garrick turned and waved his hand.

HELEN RING ROBINSON

AFTER a protracted illness, Helen Ring Robinson, Colorado's first woman State senator, writer, lecturer, and politician, widely known throughout the West as a leader of suffrage work, recently died at Denver.

Quite Competent, Thank You

By

Harry Golden

Author of "Gimlet Eyes," "Greenhorn's Lake," etc.

BEING at least ninety-nine per cent optimist, old "Pahranagat Jimmy" found difficulty in convincing himself that trouble loomed just ahead. But hard luck had beset him in earnest, and now he was forced to admit it—not just the usual hard luck of the average old prospector, but hard luck with a multitude of alarming complications.

Jimmy had been in uncomfortable circumstances more than once before. He could tell you of the time he was working alone on Poor Man's Creek, when he accidentally undermined a big sugar pine that came swooping down into the ground sluice to break a leg for him and pin him fast there in the wet clay. He had lain there a long time—he never knew just how long—but he had not quite given up all hope before a Basque sheep-herder came along and rescued him. And once down in the Shoshones, after putting in a round of shots in the bottom of his shaft and lighting the short fuses, the rickety ladder broke and let him back to the bottom of the hole with a shower of loose rock. He had clawed the muck away and jerked the spluttering fuses out of the dynamite cartridges just in time to save his life. He had put in two days of hard work and clever scheming just to get out of that hole. And then there was the time—but there is no need to recount all of Jimmy's misfortunes and narrow escapes; it is enough to know that he had been in tight corners before, but that he considered his present predicament the most disturbing of them all.

He had just come up alongside the vine-covered veranda in time to hear Mr. Spivens, in his shrill, disagreeable voice, mention his name. Mr. Spivens was Pahranagat Jimmy's son-in-law and one of the very few men that Jimmy knew without being able to like to some extent. It wasn't Pahranagat's wish to be an eavesdropper now, but the trend of the rather excited conversation coming from the porch surprised him into halting to listen.

"Sarah," the speaker persisted, "I tell you we've got to do something. I'm not going to stand for his sponging off of us any longer. He may be still crippled up some, but he's not as bad off as he lets on. There's lots of work around that he could do, but he hasn't even tried to find a job yet—nor he won't as long as he can impose on us. It would be bad enough if he was your own father, but he's only your stepfather, and I'm not going to put up with it any longer.

You're not going to interfere either, understand that! He wouldn't be in the fix he's in now if he'd taken care of his money when he had it; but he's an old spendthrift. He's been giving money to the children around town to buy candy with, and he's been carrying tobacco to those old broken-down tramps over at the poorhouse."

"Pa's always been too liberal for his own good," a tired feminine voice replied. "He's paid for his board and room since he came here, though, and he's helped me with the housework."

"Don't contradict *me!* stormed Mr. Spiven's squeaky voice. "I say he's an old spendthrift. If he'd taken care of some of the easy money he tells about making, he'd have enough to keep him the rest of his life. But he's broke now, and I'm going to put him out, and you're not going to interfere!"

"I don't intend to interfere," came back the weary voice. "But, Rudolph, what are we going to do with him?"

"We're going to put him in the county poorhouse where he belongs, before he eats us out of house and home. Seems to me you have to make application to a supervisor or something of the sort—none of my folks have ever had to go to the poorhouse, so I don't know what the procedure is. I'll ask Judge Gray about it this evening; he'll tell me how to go about it. Anyway, this will be the old man's last night under my roof. He's not only been eating me out of house and home, but the blundering old fool has disgraced me by going around town begging."

"Begging?" The woman's voice quickened a little with surprise.

"Yes, begging! A grubstake to go and find that lost mine he's gone dippy over, he calls it; but it's begging just the same—plain, simple begging. He's going to the poorhouse to-morrow. My folks have always been thrifty, respectable citizens, and now I don't know how I'll ever live down the humiliation this old renegade has brought upon me with his begging." Mr. Rudolph Spivens' shrill voice had risen almost to a shriek before it came to the last word.

Old Pahranagat Jimmy backed hurriedly away from the veranda and went scurrying around the corner of the house. In his rage and humiliation he forgot for the moment to favor his left side, where a long knife had been thrust between his ribs some months before. A sharp pain slowed his pace before he let himself through the gate into the alley.

So Mr. Rudolph Spivens was going to see Judge Gray about having him sent to the poorhouse, was he? Well, Pahranagat would beat him to it; he would see Judge Gray himself, first. Judge Gray had been a prospector for gold in the earlier days, before he had taken up law; he'd know the difference between a man's trying to rustle a little grubstake and just plain begging on the streets.

What was the country coming to, when people called you a beggar for trying to interest them in a profitable, legitimate proposition? Well, no matter what happened, Pahranagat wouldn't go the the county poorhouse. He had visited there with some of the old-timers, and he knew well enough what the place was like.

It was not that they didn't feed you well, and give you a good bed to sleep in, and let you take it pretty easy. But the place took something out of a man that he could never get back—hope, ambition, the same determination to get out into the hills and make another strike. He had noticed a lack of the old restless fire in the eyes of all the old prospectors over there. They had merely settled down to be taken care of to the end—had given up.

Pahranagat didn't want to give up. He couldn't afford to. He had it in mind to make another strike or two yet, even if he was bunged up a

bit and broke. He had ambition. The gold-hunter's fever burned hotter in him than ever it had before. He was not out of the running yet. He would prove that to Spivens and all the rest of them. Sarah wasn't so bad. She wouldn't be a party to this attempt to put him into the county hospital if it wasn't for her big-headed, miserly runt of a husband.

On his way to Judge Gray's office Pahranagat recalled to memory the beginning of the string of events that had led up to this calamity. Early in the winter before he had taken care of a sick prospector, and just before this unfortunate prospector died he showed Pahranagat a few samples and told him of a rich find. Pahranagat had listened to the prospector's descriptions for finding the rich ledge again, which at the time was buried in the deep snows higher up the mountain. The first discoverer had been forced, because of the early storms and his sickness, to leave before staking out a claim. He had no relatives, and he wished his last benefactor to reap the gains.

Later on, one Tony Guisseppi, a disreputable hanger-on at the camp, suspected Pahranagat of having gained knowledge of the whereabouts of the lost mine, and, in an attempt to make Pahranagat give up his secret, the outlaw had knifed him. Pahranagat had then come down into the lower country to the county seat in order to spend the winter and have his wound attended to. He had gone to stay with his stepdaughter and her husband, with, so he thought then, money enough to pay his own way; but, what with doctor's fees and all, his money had not held out. And to make things worse he couldn't convince any one that a small grubstake would be a profitable exchange for a half interest in his wonderful prospects.

Now they accused him of begging and were going to put him into the county poorhouse! Well, he would have a talk with Judge Gray. He wondered why he hadn't thought of this before. The judge was somewhat of an old-timer himself; he'd understand the difference between trying to get some one interested in a lost mine and begging money on the street.

II.

Old Pahranagat Jimmy was "hitting the grit" again. He trudged slowly through the dust of the long road that went winding over the hills to mount ever higher into the greater hills to the east. It disappeared from sight behind one point only to appear soon again upon the shoulder of another. It dived into secrecy in some shadowy hollow and staggered in a zigzag course to the summit of some neighboring bald ridge. The turns and twists of such a freakish road might soon have tried the patience of some; but nothing about this road could ever try the patience of Jimmy. It was taking him into the high Sierras, where lurked the lure—the lost mine.

Ahead of the old prospector trudged his burro. A battered frying pan and a coffeepot, blackened by the smoke of many camp fires, crowned the squaw hitch over the dusty canvas of the pack. The burro gave out the impression of having pulled through a hard winter just by the skin of his teeth. His shabby, graying coat and his stiffened muscles betrayed his age, and he didn't go hurrying along in foolish impatience to reach his journey's end. Nor did Pahranagat urge the trusty pack animal to make better time. He himself was a little stiff and sore from the first miles of the journey. Had the miserly Mr. Spivens given the old prospector the worth of his board money during the past winter, the present summer might have found him in better condition. With better nourishment the wound in his side might have healed sooner and given him less trouble now.

The deliberate gait of the burro just suited Jimmy. The summer wasn't too far gone, and the snow hadn't all disappeared from the higher passes. Pahranagat wished to reach Grandpap Mountain while there would still be enough water in the draws to do a little panning with, and he knew that he would have time enough for that without having to crowd the burro.

At last Pahranagat, still following close to the heels of his burro, pulled into the little camp, where he had received information of the lost mine from the dying prospector on the winter before. He pitched camp for the night at the edge of the little town, and after supper he strolled down the main street to see what he could see. And he saw the very last thing in the world he wished to see—Tony Guisseppi, the outlaw, who had slipped the long, shiny knife between his ribs on their last encounter. Pahranagat turned around and went directly back to his camp, with the foolish hope that Guisseppi had not recognized him and wouldn't try to follow him to the lost mine. He slept lightly that night, with his old six-shooter close beside his hand. Next morning he broke camp long before daylight and prodded the surprised burro into a livelier gait, and he climbed still higher into the hills along the winding road.

When Pahranagat made camp that noon to rest for an hour or two, he chose a good vantage point on the crest of a high bald ridge, from where he could watch the road behind him for two miles or more. He didn't intend to be taken unawares again, if Guisseppi did have it in mind to follow. He pulled his six-shooter out of its holster and examined it carefully. He tried the action and inspected the shells. He'd had a sample of Guisseppi's knife work, and he didn't care for any more of it. He wasn't greatly alarmed over the prospect of Guisseppi's following. All worth-while ventures had their drawbacks and disagreeable complications; they were to be expected and guarded against. If Guisseppi was following, he wanted to know it in time to prepare for an even break, that was all. He didn't want to be slipped up on again, more especially by a fiend who fought in the dark with a knife. Old Jimmy, like all fair fighters, dreaded a knife in the dark more than anything else.

Half a mile beyond his dinner camp Pahranagat topped another bald ridge. Here he paused for another long survey of the deserted road behind, and then he left the main thoroughfare to follow along the backbone of the ridge, which led almost in a bee line for the lofty, bare face of old Grandpap Mountain. He was following easy directions that he remembered well. He would watch for a favorable place along the ridge to camp for the night, and then he should reach his landmark—the sheer red bluff above the big brush field on the shoulder of old Grandpap—early the next forenoon.

Old Pahranagat spent another watchful night under bright stars, unmolested, and broke camp early again the next morning. He wished the peculiar formation over which he now had to travel wasn't quite so susceptible to tracks, both his own and the burro's. He halted long enough once to pry the hobnails out of the soles of his heavy boots; but still he was forced to leave the double set of telltale tracks behind him wherever he went. It would be easy enough for Guisseppi to follow that trail, even days later, but there was no conceivable way out of that predicament. He would merely have to keep a sharp lookout along the back trail and always be prepared for any probable emergency.

Before noon he headed out a small steep-walled draw and came to the edge of a big service-berry patch on

the mountainside. He searched for a way in which to dodge the tangled brush field, but found none. There seemed to be nothing for it but to fight his way through, till he came to an old game trail which offered him a little easier going.

Myriad little brown birds flushed from the tangled brush ahead of him at the burro's approach. Pahranagat took particular note of this. He had never seen so many birds to the square foot of brush before. He examined some of the small round berries at hand and found that they had already begun to ripen. This surprised him a little; he hadn't thought the season so far along; and he wondered if he could find enough water in the next gulch for a little panning.

The service-berry patch held out over the low ridge and down almost to the bottom of the ravine ahead. The little brown birds continued to rise in great flocks, and, with many shrill complaints and great fluttering of wings, they flew excitedly across the gulch and disappeared along the mountainside. Pahranagat watched them, still wondering at their great numbers.

He found a little water in the bottom of the gulch and glimpsed for the first time the sheer, red bluffs on the slope beyond. There was his landmark, and he knew that somewhere in the intervening expanse of heavy brush he should find the lost ledge. With growing impatience he crowded the burro up the slope.

Along in the middle of the afternoon he found the ledge and evidence of work done by the man who had been there before him. He found the shallow shaft, there in a circular opening in the brush, and close beside it a small galvanized-iron tub, which the first prospector had evidently used to pan some of the pounded rock.

Pahranagat carefully surveyed the lay of the land with a practiced eye, and he was not particularly pleased with his findings. He realized that a careful tracker could easily follow his trail through the service-berry patch, across the gulch, and on up the mountainside through the brush to the circular opening, where he now stood. A man working there in the shaft could easily be surprised and taken at a disadvantage by a designing intruder. And Pahranagat intended to do some work at the bottom of the shaft. He would have to get some samples from the vein to break up in his mortar and others to take back with him to show when he went to sell the claim.

He removed the pack, staked the burro out in a patch of grass in the draw, and then got busy building monuments to mark his location.

In the early moonlight the old prospector looked about for a place to spread down his blankets and luckily ran onto an ideal spot, considering his probable danger of a visit from Guisseppi. Close to the foot of the solid, red-rock bluffs and above the shaft, near the rim of the circular opening in the brush patch, he built his bed; and then he scattered dry brush between the bed and the opening. Any one attempting to surprise him during the night would have to come up from the opening. The bluffs offering protection from behind, and the dry brush he had scattered would warn him of any approach from the front and sides. He cooked his supper over a small, carefully guarded fire and then went to bed with his six-shooter handy.

With the first light of the day he was back at the shaft; but it was only after considerable troubled thought and many nervous glances on all sides that he finally climbed down into the hole, with pick and shovel, to go to work. He didn't like the situation; it had too much the appearance of a man trap to suit him. What if Guisseppi should steal up on him while he was at work

down there in the shaft? What show would he have to fight his way out? None!

He stood the nervous strain for as long as he could at one time, and then he climbed out of the hole to look around again. He brought a little pile of rich samples up with him, but he seemed too greatly worried to become very much excited over them. He realized, though, from the glint of yellow in the crumbling quartz that the dying prospector had told him the truth about the great find.

He took his bucket and made three or four trips to the water hole in the draw for water, which he emptied into the tub, and then he ground up bits of rock in the mortar; and, fetching his gold pan, he worked with it over the tub, being careful not to waste any of the water. He was protected somewhat by the dump thrown up from the shaft, and he felt safer there than he would have had he gone to the water hole to do his panning.

The amount of gold he found in the first pan surprised him. He had realized at the first glance at the stringer in the shaft that the ledge was a rich one, but his hopes hadn't risen high enough to prepare him for this sort of find. He would have to uncover some more of that vein to make sure that it wouldn't pinch out at once.

In his new excitement Pahranagat almost forgot the danger that lurked over him. He remembered it, however, before climbing back into the shaft; and he sat for a long time with a troubled look on his wrinkled, sunburned face, studying the silent brush fields below and across the draw, squinting his faded blue eyes to penetrate the leafy entanglements. And then, as he still sat there, the wrinkles about his eyes suddenly scattered only to collect again in a broad grin.

"Pshaw," he chuckled, "here I am worryin' my old fool head off, an' I'm as safe here as a dollar in Rudolph Spiven's pocket, if I only keep my senses about me. It's them little brown birds feedin' in the service-berry patch. Lucky I thought of 'em at all. Guess they ain't much chance of Mr. Guisseppi slippin' up on me with his toad stabber now." He chuckled again and without another look around climbed back into the shaft.

It was afternoon when old Pahranagat paused at his work, there at the bottom of the shaft. The first sight of many odd little shadows that went flitting across the bare rock, there at his feet, made him wonder. He listened for a moment and then turned his head to look up toward the sky. He seemed thoroughly convinced that the signal which he had been awaiting had at last arrived. He clambered up out of the shaft with a good deal of alacrity for a man who had so narrowly escaped being sent to the county hospital for his infirmities.

Arrived at the surface he glanced hurriedly toward the gulch and the brush field beyond; but he saw no signs of life, save the hundreds of little brown birds that came flying toward him, like wind-driven clouds. He jerked his red-flannel shirt off over his head, slipped the body of it over his pick handle and stuck the points of the pick through the arm holes to support a short length of each sleeve. He then propped the pick against the tub, and against that he propped his shovel. He reached for his old slouch hat and balanced it on the end of the shovel handle. He backed away from the hastily contrived dummy and seemed satisfied with its deceitful appearance. Any one coming into the opening from the opposite side would certainly be fooled into believing that old Pahranagat himself sat there at the tub, with head and shoulders just visible above the dump.

The old prospector hurried to the edge of the circular opening in the brush field

and followed along under cover toward the gulch. He paused in his secure shelter to watch for developments, and he was not kept long in waiting.

A man crossed the gulch on foot and came on to the edge of the opening; there he paused long enough to take careful note of an old flannel shirt and a slouch hat near the opening of the shaft. He crouched a little and then came on more cautiously into the opening, with a flat automatic pistol in his hand. When the intruder reached the center of the open space, he halted, dropped to one knee, and, supporting the automatic with both hands, drew a careful bead on the old red-flannel shirt —on a point exactly between the shoulders—and fired. The shirt did not move, and the intruder fired two more shots in rapid succession before the dummy tumbled into the shaft—pick, shovel, shirt, hat, and all. The man in the open, Tony Guisseppi, sprang to his feet and rushed toward the shaft. And old Pahranagat Jimmy scrambled from his screen and followed close on his would-be assassin's heels, with his big six-shooter cocked and the fire of battle flashing from his old blue eyes.

Tony Guisseppi stood at the edge of the shaft, looking down and wondering how a dead man could spread out so flat at the bottom of a hole, when Pahranagat prodded him in the back with his revolver and apprised him of the trick that had worked so well. Guisseppi dropped his automatic at the old prospector's command and turned slowly to face his captor.

It wasn't much of a chance that Pahranagat gave Guisseppi then, but the old prospector should have known better than to give the other any chance at all.

The outlaw was as strong and active as a tiger, and with one spring he reached the old prospector, knocking the big six-shooter from his grasp. They went down together in a scramble of wildly flailing arms and legs. Old Pahranagat twisted and turned on the rocky dump, tearing the flesh on his naked arms and chest and back; but all to no avail, for Guisseppi proved too strong for him. But even Guisseppi was not strong enough to hold old Pahranagat down with one hand, while he reached for his knife with the other. With one mighty thrust the prospector sent the outlaw over backward down the dump and into the shaft, at the bottom of which he bounded with a thud.

Before the would-be murderer had recovered from his fall into the shaft, Pahranagat had his hands bound securely behind his back. He put on the old red-flannel shirt again and then waited patiently till Guisseppi revived sufficiently to help himself out of the hole. Then the old prospector also bound his prisoner's feet and left him lying there on his back, till he went to the gulch and a little later returned with the burro.

Old Pahranagat felt pretty well satisfied with the way things had turned out, as he went prancing through the service-berry patch, herding the burro with its strange load and routing the little brown birds in great flocks from their feeding grounds again. He was headed for the main road and the camp beyond, with some fine specimens from the relocated ledge to exhibit before some prospective buyer and a thoroughly disheartened bad man for the first deputy sheriff they should come across.

His mind dwelt on the recent scuffle with justifiable pride. He had come out with slight damage, save for the loss of a little hide. The old knife wound in his side hadn't handicapped him to any considerable extent. Evidently it was getting well at last. He had been winded a little in the fight, but otherwise he felt about as good as new. It was wonderful what plenty of good grub, good water, and the high mountain climate could do for a man. Even the old burro had picked up and now was

ambling along the ridge at a good gait.

Old Pahranagat Jimmy was wondering what Mr. Rudolph Spivens would think of him upon hearing the news that his venerable father-in-law had made another great strike. He wondered if the thrifty Mr. Spivens would undertake to send him to the county hospital now. He rather thought not, and he chuckled gleefully to himself, as he marched proudly along.

III.

Pahranagat Jimmy had been back at the county seat several days before he finally gave over to a spirit of forgiveness, which prompted him to return to the Spivens household to renew former relations and to prove to all concerned that he was not the man to hold a grudge for long. He opened the gate, entered the yard, and then, for the second time, his approach to the house was arrested by sounds coming from the vine-hidden veranda in excited conversation.

"So you predict that he'll be back, do you? You think, now that he's accidentally stumbled onto a rich mine and sold it for a fortune, that he'll come back and try to make amends for all the trouble and humiliation he's put me to? Well, I'm telling you that he won't—understand! The old spendthrift! But I've thought out a way to prevent his squandering all that money he's started to throw away so shamelessly. He's incompetent to take care of all that wealth, and I'm going to take steps. I'm going to have myself appointed the guardian of his money. I don't know just how to go about it, but I'll see Judge Gray this evening. I've gathered evidence enough to prove his incompetency, and you, being his nearest of kin, would naturally be appointed his guardian, if you yourself were competent to handle his estate—which, of course, you are not. Therefore, it stands to reason that I'll be appointed guardian. That's my plan, woman, and you're not going to interfere!"

Pahranagat waited to hear no more, but with new alarm and with all the spirit of forgiveness and conciliation exploded, he dodged out of the gate and went hurrying down the street.

"So he's going to see Judge Gray and be appointed my guardian by law, is he? Well, I reckon *not!* I'll beat him to it again. I'll amble down an' see Judge Gray, myself."

A little later Pahranagat found himself flabbergasted at Judge Gray's answer to his plea. If Mr. Rudolph Spivens should file a formal petition with the court for the guardianship in question, the judge would have to let the law take its course. He would have to weigh the evidence forthcoming and decide the case accordingly. He couldn't do otherwise, not even to accommodate an old-timer, although he might wish to.

Accordingly within a few days Pahranagat Jimmy was cited to appear before the court in answer to Rudolph Spivens' petition.

The day set for the hearing arrived, and the old prospector reached Judge Gray's chambers just a little worried and fifteen minutes ahead of the appointed time. He might easily have been mistaken for a minister of the gospel in his black frock coat and spotless white collar, had it not been for the deep tan on his wrinkled neck and the big hard callouses on his hands—and for the point of the big red bandanna that protruded from the split in his coat tails.

Judge Gray entered and seated himself in the big swivel chair behind his flat-topped desk. This was the first time Pahranagat had ever seen his old friend officially ensconced, and to the old prospector he looked impressive, austere, almost forbidding. Only a rather formal nod passed between the two, before they were joined by Mr. and Mrs. Spivens.

Mr. Spivens stepped briskly to a seat

beside the judge's desk, with not even a glance for Pahranagat. And his wife followed with tired steps and with meek eyes cast down upon the heavy carpet. Mr. Spivens sat stiffly erect in the high-backed chair, with his thin, pointed chin jutting out aggressively to form the sharpest contour of his sharp-featured face. His watery small eyes sought the judge with impatient inquisitiveness. Old Pahranagat fumbled a little nervously with his new hat. Mrs. Spivens' tired eyes dwelt upon her thin, work-roughened hands in her lap. The judge ruffled his papers, looked up at the assembled group, and at last broke the uncomfortable silence.

"And this is all the evidence you have to substantiate the claims set forth in your petition to this court for the guardianship over the estate of James A. Hodges, better and more familiarly known as Pahranagat Jimmy? It is charged by you that Mr. Hodges is wholly incompetent to handle an estate amounting to some sixty thousand dollars in bank. He has been carrying on, so you say, in an irrational manner. He gave the Widow Morgan a new washing machine that must have cost at least one hundred and fifty dollars. He's been scattering nickels and dimes recklessly among the children of the town. He's been buying fruit and tobacco, and carrying it over to the county hospital and giving it to the inmates there free of charge, and all for no sane reason that you can understand. And only night before last he went into 'China Joe's' restaurant and paid all of a dollar and a half for one meal of victuals."

"He did," squeaked Mr. Spivens, stretching his scrawny neck longer through his tall, white collar, with a satisfied movement. "He did all that and more—and I can prove it. His reason is tottering—maybe he's getting old and childish. He's certainly not competent to handle all that money—sixty thousand dollars."

Here the judge turned such a severe gaze upon Pahranagat Jimmy that the old fellow squirmed a little uneasily in his chair.

"Pahran—er, I mean James A. Hodges—that is your name, is it not?" Pahranagat nodded. "Well, Mr. Hodges, you have heard the charges in Mr. Spivens' petition. Do you contradict them all, or any one of them?"

Pahranagat grinned uneasily and shook his head again.

"I must say it's beginning to look pretty bad for you then. How much money have you in the bank from the sale of that certain claim mentioned here—sixty thousand dollars?"

Pahranagat took out the red bandanna and mopped his moist brow with it before attempting an answer.

"No," he replied, "got less'n thirty thousand left now."

"What did you do with the balance you got from the sale of the claim—the other thirty thousand?"

"I—I, well, you see, I had to give that to the feller that grubstaked me."

"And why did you have to do that?"

"Jest the rules of the game, jedge. You got to divide whatever you strike with the feller that grubstakes you."

"H'm," mused the judge aloud. "Rules of the game, eh?"

Mr. Spivens bounced out of his chair like a jack-in-the-box.

"Did that old numbskull go and give away half of that fortune to some fool that didn't know any better than to grubstake *him?*" he shrilled.

"It seems that he did," retorted the judge with a sharp glance in Mr. Spiven's direction. "But what are you here for—to bring charges of robbery against the grubstaker, or to substantiate your charges of incompetency against Mr. Hodges? Sit down and keep still!"

The judge turned his attention to the old prospector again.

"As I have been led to understand before, Mr. Hodges, after you got this

small grubstake you went out into the hills alone and found a lost mine that nobody but yourself and your grubstaker would take any stock in. You were followed by an outlaw, who would have murdered you for your find, if you hadn't let a lot of little brown birds, feeding in a service-berry patch, keep watch and give you warning, which warning enabled you to play a clever trick on the would-be murderer. And I understand that you brought this bad man out on your burro and turned him over to a deputy sheriff. You sold your claim for sixty thousand dollars and gave half of that sum to your grubstaker. Am I right in all these surmises?"

Pahranagat nodded uneasily.

Judge Gray turned to address Mr. Spivens again.

"Sorry, but I don't see how I can grant your petition," he announced. "I don't see any grounds for the incompetency charge here. Mr. Hodges seems to me to be in pretty fair condition, both physically and mentally. He may be a little too liberal for his own good, a bit reckless with his money at times, but I've found that men in his business usually have the idea that dollars were made round so that they would roll. They risk a lot sometimes in getting them, and they seem to find a great deal of pleasure in just watching them roll—in helping out poor old women and old friends and in eating a regular meal—and paying for it—in a respectable place like China Joe's, now and then. And I'm afraid that, if I pronounced Mr. Hodges incompetent to take care of himself or his money, I'd be casting reflections upon my own incompetency; for, you see, I'm the old fool who took stock in his story of the lost mine and put up the grubstake. And if you are afraid that Mr. Hodges might go broke in the future and become dependent upon his relatives or upon charity, I'll quiet your worries there. My thirty thousand dollars out of the deal will be held in readiness to grubstake him again on any proposition he feels like undertaking. I'm not afraid to back up any man who can go out into the hills for a few weeks, once in a while, and find a sixty-thousand-dollar stake all in one pile. No, I can't find a man like James A. Hodges a fit subject for a guardian just yet." The judge turned to the old prospector. "Mr. Hodg—no, by George—Pahranagat Jimmy, old partner, you may go on about your business now—matter's been dismissed."

Pahranagat, with a broad grin on his face, stepped up to the desk and held a hurried, whispered conversation with the judge. When he had finished what he had to say, he handed Judge Gray a narrow slip of paper and then turned and pased through the door into the hall.

Mr. Spivens had again jumped excitedly to his feet to offer objections in his squeaky displeasing voice.

The judge waved him to silence.

"Just a moment!" he warned. "I've something here for Mrs. Spivens that might prove at least one of your charges—that Pahranagat is a trifle too liberal. Here's a check for ten thousand dollars, which he left for you, Mrs. Spivens. He asked me to give it to you in his absence, as he didn't want to be embarrassed by your thanks."

The woman looked up quickly with a bright smile, as she accepted the check. The tired light seemed suddenly to have vanished from her eyes.

"And, Mr. Spivens," the judge went on, turning to the dumfounded husband, "Pahranagat has something for you, too. I thought perhaps that you didn't deserve anything, and I told him so. But when one of these liberal old fellows gets his mind set on giving somebody something, I've found that it's useless to try to talk him out of the notion. He made me promise to send

you outside to get it from him, whatever it is. Mrs. Spivens can wait here with me till you return."

Mr. Spivens scurried from the room with a thin grin of pleased anticipation spreading over his peaked face.

The judge and Mrs. Spivens sat waiting there in the chambers for several minutes, before old Pahranagat's voice came up to them through the open window, from the courtyard below:

"An' maybe you'll treat Sarah better from now on."

Evidently the absent ones were returning; but only Mr. Spivens came back into the chambers. He came back with a rush that burst the door open and landed halfway across the room. His high collar, now tattered and stained, hung by one buttonhole only. His thin nose seemed to have been lately remodeled into one of more chubby proportions. One swollen eyelid blinked stiffly over a surprised, angry, bloodshot eye.

"I—I want the district attorney! I want to swear out a warrant for that old ruffian's arrest—for assault and battery. Where's the——"

Judge Gray held up a protesting hand.

"Why, my dear Mr. Spivens!" he exclaimed. "I am surprised at your looks and your actions. Where is all that family pride I've so often heard you boasting about? What terrible thing is this that has happened to you?"

Right here the outraged Mr. Spivens must have caught the recklessly jubilant twinkle in the venerable judge's eye, for he wheeled and bolted for the door again.

Mrs. Spivens arose to follow her husband, with a mischievous, daring twinkle in her own eye. If the judge read that expression aright, Sarah Spivens had come to a strange awakening of new and wonderful possibilities. That look plainly foretold the fall of another tyrant. The scrawny Mr. Spivens was no longer the czar of his own household.

"Humph," mused the judge aloud, when the excitement was all over, and he found himself alone in the room. "The incompetency of old Pahranagat Jimmy Hodges! Quite competent, thank you, I'd say!"

THE LAST OF HIS TRIBE

JEFF HARNEY, the last full-blooded male member of the Siuslaw tribe of Northwest Indians, recently passed away at his cabin near Florence, Oregon. He was said to have reached the advanced age of one hundred and twenty-five years. Three women, who are the only remaining members of the tribe, claim that they have in their possession certain records which substantiate the claim that the aged brave was that old.

DEDICATE TREE TO PRESIDENT HARDING

CALIFORNIA forests have contributed a permanent memorial to the late President Harding. At Giant Forest, California, the second largest tree in the world was dedicated to the dead President as the Warren Harding Tree. Colonel John R. White, superintendent of the Sequoia and Great National Parks, was in charge of the service. In dedicating the giant sequoia, which is thirty-two feet in diameter and two hundred and eighty feet in height, he declared that the great redwood, already five thousand years old, "will grow stronger and greater and will stand as a monument to our late President when the pyramids and granite shafts have crumbled to dust."

The Gray Pigeon

by

Wilson Collison

LONG ago "Little Bill" Pepper told me that rolling bones gathers much moss. Mebbe that is true, but in this here mean cow town of El Toro I've tried to stop all the rough stuff and clean the city up for a blue Sunday. Little Bill shuffled off a year ago and left me as the sole gent of law and order. I sure am getting pretty old and banged up for the sheriff's job, but the folks out here like me and say I have to go on till death catches me and throws me for a good finish.

This here town is near the old San Fé Trail in New Mexico, and some few years back it sure was the toughest little meeting place you could ever think of. It was, and is some little yet, a hang-out for plainsmen in from the ranges to have a good time, and they do that to the best of their abilities when they cut loose. Bein' an old-timer and rememberin' some of them gay days back in the past, I try to be fair and square with the boys and not tie the noose 'round them too tight. Still, I have to protect the town, and I get plumb nervous and sick of it sometimes.

For four or five months now we've been annoyed out here by a gent which terms himself "Copper-skin Pascal," and by runnin' down his record, which he ain't at no pains to conceal, I have found out he is a real bad man from the lower San Dios country. Pascal is one of them artists with a gun. He is hard on us tired old fellers who try to suppress the two-gun stuff.

One hot night I drifts into the Three Checkers House, where you can get a little bad booze if they know who you are; but I have regulated this place pretty well, and Simpson, the proprietor, knows I means business, and he don't never go too far with the kind words I have issued to him in allowin' him to serve the little something to the best boys. I'm an old-fashioned feller who ain't been locoed as yet by the law-and-orders leagues which is sweepin' over this here country of ours and takin' all the good things of life out of our hands.

Well, when I gets into the Three Checkers, there is quite some crowd there, and I sees they are havin' a pretty good little time of it. I looks round carefully and don't see nothin' which would call for my attention, as all the boys is steady and not oversteppin' themselves. Simpson calls out and asks me to step up and have some ginger ale, which I does, speakin' to some of the

boys I knows well. I sees there is one or two strangers in the place, and I looks them over close to savvy if they are O. K., or some light-fingered gents which might be out in this land fixin' up some cattle rustlin'.

As I lifts my glass in my hand—and I can tell you frankly it ain't ginger ale, but durned good whisky—I glances over my shoulder, and sittin' over by a table, which is close to the window, lookin' out on the street, with his head resting in the palm of his hand, is a lad which I had never before laid eyes on. I turns halfway around and studies this newcomer, and I sees that he is pretty handsome and not more'n thirty. He ain't very big, and I calculate he don't weigh no more'n one-thirty-five. He wears a old pair of boots and some dirty corduroy pants stuck in them, and his pants looks as though they are about to let loose and show him out to the world. The shirt he has on is once upon a time white, but it is all torn and ragged, and around his neck hangs a knotted blue handkerchief.

As I surveys this lad, he looks up, and his eyes meets mine. His face is kinda pinched, but his eyes is the most attractive eyes I ever looked into in the many years I've been huntin' and savin' good and bad men. They are black as coal, and so sharp they kinda make you feel as if they is goin' right through you. Lookin' at him I figures he ain't much more'n a kid, and he sure appears plumb delicate for this land of big fists and some few guns. I turns back and leans across the bar, motionin' to Simpson.

"Who's your friend, Simp?" I whispers, casuallike. "The kid over'n the corner."

Simpson shoots a look over and then comes back, fillin' my glass up.

"They calls him 'The Gray Pigeon' round this here town," he says. "Don't nobody never know where he comes from. Been here about a week, and I guess he has got the consumption, or something like it. Don't seem to have no money, neither. Comes in here now'n then and buys a little soft drink, just to get a bit of grub, I guess."

"Looky here, Simp!" I says, pointin' my finger at him. "You ain't tellin' me that lad is hungry?"

"Don't know nothin' about it," Simpson retorts sullenly. "Anyways, I ain't passin' out nothin' for nothin'. Things is too high these days, and I ain't makin' much money as it is."

"Simp," I says, bringin' my hand down on the bar, "you sure are a liar!" Then I snaps the whisky glass back on his greasy deck and ambles across toward the kid sittin' in the corner. I takes a chair and pulls it up beside the table and grins at him friendly.

"Howdy, stranger," I remarks easily, not wantin' to scare him to death. He looks at me with a kinda faint smile, and it makes me feel the same as if this here boy has been cheated out of somethin' good in this here restless thing they calls life. "New in this here town, ain't you?"

"Hello," he returns and leans back in his chair. "Yeah, I been out here a couple of weeks. Kind of busted up on the inside, Mr. Sheriff."

"You know who I am?" I says.

"Sure," he answers. "Don't need no help, do you? Been lookin' for a job ever since I come in, but I guess they ain't no place for a guy out here."

"What's your line?" I asks, thinkin' to draw him out and get some straight figures on what he is here for, and mebbe find out is he all right. For a couple of minutes he don't say nothin', but just kinda looks at me with his black eyes, and he is smilin' some little again. It don't take me long to discover there is some funny mystery about this here boy, and I sure is plumb interested, as out in this country we don't get many novelties. Since my trip to the East some few years back, I've been longin'

to see and meet up with new things and get some vision of what is goin' on in the world beyond. I sees that he don't belong in the cow country, and I sees that he is at one time a Easterner, himself.

"Mebbe I could help you get something. Over to the Bar L they have been lookin' for some extra men to do some work in the round-up."

"I don't rope," says the lad; and I thinks his voice sounds kinda tired. "Nope, I don't know a thing about the cow country, but if you're lookin' for some guy to give you a hand in your business, Mr. Sheriff, I'll take you for anything you want to pay."

"In hard luck?" I asks, feelin' mebbe I ain't goin' to do the wrong thing if I invites him to the bar for some little feed and drink.

"Broke," he says with a slow smile. He looks at me kinda anxious, the same as if he feels I will give him a job. But I ain't never seen no fellers in this country with enough nerve to tag along with me when I am out lookin' for bad men. Pore little old Bill Pepper was the only boy which ever had a ounce of courage, and when Bill passed on I says to myself I won't never find another assistant good as him. So from this here angle I ain't none interested in the lad, but I sort of feels he is on the square, and if I can help him some I sure will. But when a gent can't do nothin' in Rome like you are supposed to do when you're in Rome, how can he earn his feed? And the boy which Simpson has called The Gray Pigeon has just admitted to me that he don't know nothin' about the cow country.

There is some silence, and the lad gets out a broken-up cigarette and tries to light it; this here is touchin' to me, as I hate to see anybody without nothin' to smoke. So I digs down into my pocket and hauls out a can of ripe old stuff and some papers, which I passes on to him. He takes it and thanks me; then he carefully rolls himself a pill, which I don't use, stickin' as I does to the old pipe.

"Out here for your health?" I inquires, as he hands the can of tobacco back to me.

"Some," he says, lighting his cigarette. "Gettin' in pretty good shape now, though."

Somehow I feels it is hard to make talk with this here boy, and I sees that he don't want to tell nothin' about his past life. Which is his and every other gent's business. So long as the boys don't break no laws in my regions, I ain't none worried about what they has done in some other parts of the land.

I was just about to open my mouth to ask him some more questions, when all of a sudden I hears the sharp crack of some frisky gent's gun out somewhere in the street. Every one in this here room does a quick turn and looks for the door; and, bein' the sheriff of the village, I jumps up from the table and reaches for my own shootin' iron. Nobody never knows just what is goin' to happen out here, and with all the cattle rustlers and bad gunmen wanderin' in and out of El Toro, you sure has to look out for your own gold.

There is a long silence, and nothin' happens to speak of. Simpson, back of the bar, howls with laughter and says he calculates it is the Fourth of July; then he yells all hands up and begins to fire the short-length booze again. But myself, I ain't takin' no chances, and so keep my eyes glued to the door. Outside I sees the moonlight siftin' down into the hot, dusty street, and pretty soon I hears the sound of a broncho's hoofbeats echoin' through the night. I glances back at the kid sittin' at the table, and he is calmly smokin' up the cigarette I give him. He don't seem none concerned, and to see him you'd sure think he didn't have no feelin's left in his system.

As I'm about to sit down at the table again and resume the conversation, which has been shot up by somebody's loose gun, I'm startled to see "Skinny" Wheeler come runnin' in through the door. Skinny don't have no hat on, and he looks like he has been pushed out of somebody's corral by the swift kick of a bad pony's hoof.

"Jim!" he yells, rushin' for me. "Jim!"

"Right here," I says, climbin' up to my feet again and grabbin' Skinny, as he rushes into my arms. "What's the shootin' for, and can't you run without gettin' so excited?"

"Pascal!" howls Skinny, wipin' the perspiration from his face.

"Pascal what?" I asks, not for the minute savvying what he is yelling about.

"Copper-skin himself," Skinny bawls, wavin' his arms up and down like a pump handle. By this time all the boys in the room have turned round and are watchin' Skinny, the same as if they think he is about to issue some statement on the discovery of new gold fields.

"Spit her out!" I shouts, smacking Skinny on the back. "Is that locoed bad gent round this here town again?"

"Round this here town!" Skinny groans. "He just rode in and shot Jepson to death, and the dirty killer has rode off with all Bill's money. Took it outa the coin box under the counter."

There is a sudden roar in the room, and the whole crowd makes a run for Skinny, parkin' themselves round him and yellin' questions, which Skinny don't answer, he is so nervous and scared.

"Where's he gone to, Skinny?" I bellows.

"Ain't got no idea," Skinny pants. "Just rides in an' shoots Bill and takes his money and rides off again. Where you been?" he ends in a scream. "You're a flivver of a sheriff!"

Skinny is Bill Jepson's brother-in-law, and I sure don't blame him none for gettin' all heated up. Jepson, he runs the general store down the street; and, while I feels it is some calamity, I figures out Skinny ain't as upset as he makes out, seein' he will succeed to the store now. But I don't feel so good over this here latest little act of Pascal's, as I knows it means a lot of trouble for me, and Pascal never had no love at all for me—which means I am the gent selected to bring him to justice. Knowin' Pascal as I does, I figures the chances are I ain't never goin' to get him, but he's more'n likely to get me.

"Come on, you howlin' coyotes!" I roars, snappin' out my gun and wavin' it. "This here is the last time Pascal will ever ride into our town and do his dirty work. I want two good men to come with me. We got to hit that gent's trail quick and bring him in, dead or alive. Who goes?"

Now I knows all the boys in El Toro, and I knows none of them is cowards, but I also knows durned well not one of them is goin' to volunteer to give me a hand on this Pascal hunt. No, sir—they all likes to live too well to go prancin' round after that half-breed killer, and they also knows that, if they gets within a few yards of him, they is likely to be passed out into the unknown. So I ain't surprised when nobody yells with joy over the chance to go with me.

"A bunch of cattle chasers!" I shoots out, sarcasticlike. "But none of you is man chasers. Shore you are—a bunch of coward cattle chasers!"

I waits for a minute for somebody to step forward with the blush of shame, but nobody does, and I am about to start off in despair, knowin' I ain't got no chance in the world single-handed and figurin' I ain't got much more chance if I has a whole posse.

Then I turns round sudden, feelin' somebody touch me on the arm. I looks

and sees it is the kid which was sittin' at the table. He is smilin' a little, and I sees he looks these here town boys of ours over with deep contempt.

"I'll go with you, sheriff," he says in a easy voice.

"What?" I says. "You don't know nothin' about this here country, and that feller is a real man-killer."

"Is there any reward for bringin' him in?" asks this kidlike gent, grinnin' some more and takin' off his hat, while he shoves his black hair back from his forehead with one hand.

"Five hundred dollars!" bellows Skinny, jumpin' forward eagerly. "Five hundred dollars for any man that brings Pascal back, dead or alive."

"Raise her up, you snivelin' cowards!" I shouts, wavin' my gun. Then the boys all chip in and begin to bid her up the scale till they reaches a thousand-dollar top.

"All right," cuts in the kid. "I'll take the job. Now, look here, Mr. Sheriff, I got to have a promise from you."

"Shore," I says, grabbin' at the straw like a drownin' man. "Come on."

"If I do what I set out to do, will you give me a job and pay me enough to keep me goin' till I decide to quit and go back East?"

"Boy," I says, "if you get this Pascal gent, or if you help me get him and end my troubles, I appoint you my assistant at a good salary, and these here brave citizens of the town will pay you every durned week, or take the job as sheriff."

"All right," returns the kid, startin' for the door, everybody lookin' after him the same as if they thinks he is crazy with the heat. "You got a horse outside?"

"I'll get you one," I says, and steps lively for the door. "Mine is there, but you'll need a good, fast pony to trace along with me."

"Nothin' doin'," said the kid, turnin' round in the door and lookin' at me. "I go after that bad man alone."

"What!" I yells, startled almost out of my boots. "You shore is locoed, son."

"Nope," he says slowly. "I saw Pascal ride past the window, while I was sittin' at the table. I know which way he went and where he went. If I go, I go alone."

"Locoed!" I bawls again. "That gent will fill you full of lead, and we won't never see you again."

"All right," returns this wonder kid, turnin' back again, as if he is goin' over to sit down. "Then you go get him."

"You mean," I says, grabbin' him by the arm, "that if you don't go alone you don't go at all?"

"Yes, that's right," he says, with a grin.

"Then go on. Mebbe I'm the sheriff, but I ain't got no wild desire to catch Pascal, if there is some other gent likes the job better."

"Good," remarks the kid, and moves back to the door. "Come on and show me your bronc."

"Got a gun?" I asks quickly, startin' to get my other one out'n my holster.

"Never used one in my life," says the kid, passin' off through the door.

As I hurries out through the door, pursued by the crowd in Simpson's, I begins to think they has let this kid out of some asylum in the effete East and has sent him out to El Toro to count the cactus needles in the desert.

II.

Now mebbe some of you gents thinks I am, as Skinny has remarked, a flivver of a sheriff. But, of course, you don't know I am a pretty old man, and my palmy days of chasin' after bad men is over. I have in the past several times tried to organize a posse to hunt this here Pascal down, but the boys ain't very lively out here no more, and they

don't figure Pascal cuts up often enough for them to risk their lives bringin' him to justice. I have on one occasion tried to get some aid down from Bilger, a good-size town some miles off near the border; but they tells me up there they has enough trouble with a new outfit of cattle rustlers and says for me to make my own laws, if I am the sheriff.

Well, we goes over to Jepson's store and picks him up and gets him all laid out for the land of sleep. I figures I will wait till dawn, and, if the kid don't come in, I will have to make my last stand and hit the trail after Pascal, but I knows in my own mind I won't never come back.

We all repairs back to Simpson's and sits round, some of the boys playin' a little cards. But we all is pretty silent, as we begins to see that, if Pascal gets away with this, he will start a reign of real bad-man stuff and bring on some more of his friends to help him out. This here has got to be a pretty peaceful cow town now, and not many of the boys is so quick with the guns, as they don't never have the occasion to use them.

The night seems to move pretty slow, and we are all wonderin' whether Pascal has met up with the strange-actin' kid, and whether he has finished him off or not.

Just as the dawn is commencin' to come up with a streak of light, and everybody in Simpson's is half asleep, we hears the hoofbeats of a pony echoin' among the adobe buildings. Everybody rises like a quick storm and starts for the door; but I waves them all back and makes them sit still. We listen, and the hoofbeats grow louder. I go over to the window and look out, and, lopin' along down the street in the fast-risin' dawn, I sees my own broncho, Peter, comin', and the kid is sittin' on him, pretty good for a lad that ain't cut out for the range. Peter is a nice, quiet little cuss; that's why I wasn't afraid to let the stranger ride him. As I looks, I thinks I sees somethin' lollin' across my pony, right back of the kid. I rubs my eyes and turns back, lookin' at the anxious faces of the boys in the room. Then all of a sudden the swingin' doors of Simpson's place shoots open, and in comes the kid ridin' my bronch, and tied with some old ropes on his back is Copper-skin Pascal!

"Howdy!" says the kid, jerkin' Peter up and throwin' the reins over his tossin' head. "Here's the baby you asked for."

There is a wild yell, and all the boys makes a dash, crowdin' round the pony and lookin' at Pascal. I brushes them aside and takes a good look at him, myself. I sees that he is deader than a doornail, having been popped right between the eyes. Pascal sure has a wicked-lookin' face, and I figures it out we have got rid of some bad company. But how this here tenderfoot kid did it——

"Looky here, boy!" I yells. "How did you hit this yaller-skinned killer? You says to me you don't never use a gun."

The kid looks down at me, still sittin' Peter, and I sees his black eyes shoot some fire. Then he grins, and the boys looks up at him, the same as if they has just discovered something new in New Mexico.

"Listen," says the kid. "This guy ain't a bad man. I told you I'd get him. Sure I did. I had a grudge against him, anyway. Couple of weeks ago he held me up on the Juan Jose trail and pulled my last five bucks away from me. I remembered him for that, as I don't never let no baby trim me when it comes to the stick-up stuff. But I don't never shoot any guy in the back. Other day, when I was walkin' along the trail, I saw him drop off and slip into a hut, back about a mile. That's where I found him to-night, see? I come up on him, and he lets go with his gun and misses, me doin' the old-time duck."

"Locoed!" I mutters, starin' at the kid and then at Pascal hangin' over my pony. "What did you hit him with?"

"Why," says the kid, reachin' into his pocket and takin' out somethin' that looks like a toy, "my old-timer—Colt twenty-five automatic. I pumped the whole magazine into him. I got a thousand bucks comin' now and a job, ain't I, sheriff?"

"You shore has!" I shouts. "Dig down, you galoots, and pass this here real guy his money."

The boys all dig willingly, and Skinny comes up, invitin' him over to Jepson's store for his five hundred, which Skinny says he will pay in a check on the Bilger bank.

"Wait a minute!" I bellows, as the kid starts to climb down off'n the pony. "Don't feed me no more of that tenderfoot stuff, kid. Who are you, and what's your line?"

"Me?" says the kid innocently, with a yawn. "Why, I'm 'Chicago' Eddie Bender, the crack shot of the old Diamond Gang, that used to keep the whole police force busy. Take this poor fish off your horse and give me and the horse somethin' to eat."

FIRE IN OIL TANK IN TEXAS

A BOLT of lightning some time ago started a fire in a great underground oil tank at El Vista, four miles west of Port Arthur, Texas. Three homes with all their contents as well as the domestic animals were destroyed. The boiling over of the huge caldron caused losses running into thousands of dollars. So intense was the heat a quarter of a mile from the tank that the crown of the gravel-ballasted road was baked like brick, the surface being raised in long blisters and blackened from the oil smoke.

There was no loss of life, but, after the roof blew off the burning tank, the terrific heat made it impossible to save the houses or their contents. The buildings in the path of the blazing oil, baked and blistered all night by the intense heat, flashed like tinder, and eye-witnesses say homes simply disappeared in an instant.

TO SHOOT RAPIDS OF GRAND CANON

FOUR specially constructed boats, carrying a surveying party of ten men, set out from Lee's Ferry, Arizona, on the first of August to shoot the three hundred miles of rapids of the Colorado River, including some of the wildest waters in the whole country.

Under the direction of the Interior Department the men went to investigate the possibilities of irrigation development, and to find some way to lessen the flood danger of the Imperial Valley. The course of the river to be traversed is crowded with rapids and swirls between steep rocky banks. It has been covered only six times before. The boats were designed to stand the rack and strain, and each member of the party was equipped with a life preserver. The course to be covered, including the dangerous gorges of the Grand and Marnle Cañons, has never been surveyed in detail.

The Sage Hen

By

F. R. Buckley

Author of the "Peg-leg Garfield," Stories etc.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

SHELBY COUNTY, Texas, is the scene of a one-sided cattle war, in which the International Beef Concern is endeavoring to obtain possession of the Circle R, owned by Joan Bruce, the "Sage Hen." In the hostilities, Joan's father and brother have both been killed, the latter's body never having been recovered. Joan has a stanch ally in the person of David Grant, an Eastern man, who conducts a guerilla warfare against the I. B. C.'s forces. The leader of these gunmen, William Rigby, attempts to capture Joan in an ambush, but she is rescued by John Arnold, a newcomer to the I. B. C. ranks who, coming upon the affray in the dark, does not know that he is fighting against the men who have hired him. In gratitude to Arnold for his rescue, and much against the advice of her foreman, Sloan, and her admirer, David Grant, Joan offers Arnold the foremanship of the Circle R. He accepts. Adjoining Shelby County, the scene of these hostilities, is Three Pines County, where Peg-leg Bill Garfield is sheriff. His sympathies are strongly with Joan Bruce.

CHAPTER VI.

ESTABLISHING SUPREMACY.

BY and large, it had been a wild night; and it might easily have continued into a still wilder early morning, had the new foreman, following the close of his conference with Joan Bruce, done the logical thing and taken his weariness and wounds to bed in the bunk house.

This, however, he did not do. Instead, with the grave statement that he believed he had dropped something back there where the fight was, he borrowed Joan's horse—which, standing neglected and shivering by the porch railing, testified mutely to the puncher's state of mind—and mounting, rode thoughtfully away from the Circle R through a cold dawn dampened by lifting mists. He not only rode thoughtfully but—a quite different thing—he was thinking; and apparently his cogitations were not of the most soothing kind.

As he passed the debouchement of the Three Pines trail, for instance, he laughed mockingly at himself and shook his head. A few minutes later, picking up from the wet grass of the battlefield his own pet Winchester, with which his own pet cerebellum had been dealt such a frightful blow, he shook his head again, and muttered "Fool!" The rifle's muzzle was plugged with dirt; the foresight was bent enough to give twenty inches windage at a hundred yards; and on the velvety surface of the butt a pony had left the mark of a large, splay hoof.

With an effort, Arnold detached his eyes from this outrage, and working the breech mechanism with a careful absent-mindedness designed to cushion

the shock if it jammed, gave a shrill whistle, twice repeated. A moment later, there was a soft whicker from behind the pine copse, and Jinny came into view.

"Come here, Jinny," said her master, smiling.

She came rather doubtfully, whinnying at every four steps, and when she reached his side, stretched out her neck and laid her head on his shoulder with the unrelieved weight which marks equine affection.

"Very nice," said John Arnold; "but why didn't you trail along after me, eh? Get off, you old bear. Lean on me any more, and you'll knock me down. Blankets!"

Briskly, the mare withdrew her head and turned her right side. Detaching his bedding roll from behind the saddle, the man rested his hand momentarily on her shoulder, then drew it backward along the wiry coat, and crisped fingers and thumb together. Jinny was not shivering, nor was she damp with sweat. She was a Mexican breed, with a skin designed for higher temperatures than had prevailed during her gallop earlier in the night. Nevertheless, having detached two blankets, Arnold flung one of them over her back, and in the absence of straps on its edges, tucked its four down-hanging corners under the *cincha*. He made a vague motion or two toward unsaddling. But he was too tired. The pony, now nuzzling his knee, seemed to understand.

"Dance, old lady," he commanded, pointing to a spot ten yards removed from the huddle of bodies and the group of ponies standing at gaze near by. And while Jinny, taking station at the indicated point, gravely thudded the earth to scare out possible rattlers and tarantulas from their holes, her master walked rather unsteadily over to the grim tableau.

It seemed to have lost a certain quality of awesomeness with the waxing of the light. Death looks very mean in the dawn—especially if the observer's mouth is dry, his eyes smarting, and his head aching violently from injury and lack of sleep.

It was extremely annoying, moreover, that as Arnold bent to replace his lost revolver with a gun from the belt of a fallen enemy, the man should move one arm feebly and groan. After a muttered remark expressing his emotions at finding sleep delayed again, the foreman of the Circle R dealt with the annoyance rapidly and effectively. There were three men who seemed to be only wounded. With difficulty, he picked them up, one after another, bound them across the saddles of three of the grazing ponies, securing their pendent heads and feet together with reatas from the saddles; and then, with a sharp cut of the quirt on each flank, and a *"Vaya con Dios!"* at which he laughed weakly, started the animals off for their homes.

It was an even chance that they would go somewhere else, or, in spite of their burdens, go nowhere in particular at all, but he could do no more. In fact, he cursed himself for a soft-hearted fool for exhausting his last strength doing so much. Dragging his blanket over his shoulder, he could scarcely stagger to the pounded spot upon which Jinny awaited him, and having reached it, he fell down overtaken by sleep from which he awoke shivering an hour later, to roll himself in his bedding.

After that, he lay as one dead until the sun, swinging high, shone redly through his eyelids, at half past nine.

Then, sitting bolt upright, a hand, from force of habit, closing on the gun butt which had lain convenient during unconsciousness, he said "Oooh!" yawned, stretched, and climbed to his feet. He had slept eight hours, and felt like a giant refreshed with wine—the morning after the refreshment, for he still had a headache.

On the other side of the pine copse, the boundary of the Circle R was marked by a gully which, dry in summer, was at present the bed of a sizable spring freshet from the hills. Extracting a small coffeepot from the war bag on Jinny's withers, Arnold filled it with ice-cold water, set it down on the bank of the stream and then, leisurely undressing, flopped bodily into the torrent. The temperature was very little above freezing. But the dip seemed to do him good. He emerged, blowing like a whale, pinched water out of his nose with a thumb and finger, shook it out of his ears with a vigor that made his head throb, and dried himself sketchily with his shirt, which he then spread on a clump of chaparral.

Finally, pulling on the rest of his clothes, except his boots, he seized his coffeepot and proceeded to build a fire. While the pot boiled, he put on his boots. Then, still thinking of other things, he investigated various rents in his neat garments by seeing how many fingers he could stick through them. The average appeared to be four to a garment.

Having breakfasted, John Arnold rode back to Circle R, and within five minutes of his arrival, was busily exercising his company manners for the benefit of Sloan and the other punchers. He was not sufficiently insane to imagine that the ranch force had the slightest intention of accepting him as foreman; yet with their eyes upon him, he felt constrained to issue his first orders in the tone of one who takes obedience for granted.

"I want you boys," he said, his peculiar young-old gaze full on Sloan's face, "to put in to-day building a kind of barricade between the house and the bunk house here, and between the bunk house and the barn, and between the barn and the house. That'll make a kind of triangle. At least, I want half of you to work at that. The other half's coming out with me, and see if there's any cattle left on this ranch."

"Oh, we are, are they?" asked Mr. Sloan aristocratically.

John Arnold slipped out of his saddle. "You talking to me?" he asked curtly.

"Yeah! And you can go plumb——"

It was later likened variously to the striking of a thunderbolt, the explosion of ten sticks of dynamite, and a head-on collision between two flashes of lightning. With a fresh spontaneity which negatived entirely the idea that he had been in two desperate fights in the previous twenty-four hours, John Arnold went into action again with an all-embracing fury that might have dismayed regular troops. He happened to hit Sloan a conventional, though unconventionally powerful, punch on the nose; but he seemed perfectly willing to kick, wrestle, bite, or use a gun butt —though he did none of these things, except to Pinky Pawson, who picked up a bottle, and was promptly awarded all four.

"Had enough?" snapped the terror, as Pinky fell.

"I——" began Corliss.

It was an explanatory, apologetic, rather wondering start to a conciliatory speech; but it was misinterpreted, as Corliss' remarks were rather apt to be, and Arnold stopped it with a really shocking left to the jaw.

"Anybody else?" he demanded.

There was a silence, broken only by the attempts of Mr. Sloan to breathe through the fallen arches of his nose. On either side of the hand which covered this member, a pair of mild blue eyes, still gushing involuntary tears, stared fixedly at the new foreman. As has been hinted, Mr. Sloan's mind was not of the most agile type, and tucked away in some recesses of his brain was the precept that might is right—or anyway, that a good fist-fighter can't be all bad. On either side of Mr. Sloan, as he wrestled with this doctrine, the other

punchers of the Circle R stood motionless and speechless because they really did not know what to do next.

"I want you boys to listen to me for one minute," said John Arnold, watching them carefully, "and after that, you can come on if you like. Right at this minute, I don't want to hurt you—you look all right to me. But if you rush me after I've talked, I'll know you're a stupid bunch of louts, and it'll give me real pleasure to wipe the floor with the gang of you. Yes. Now listen. I hired out to the I. B. C. for my own reasons, which are no darn business of yours. I'm a fighter by trade. Yes—professional bad man, if you like. That's why they hired me. You-all seem to have been too tough a nut for their amateurs to crack; so they've cleaned out all the gang that was here last year, and replaced 'em with us. Now, you boys are willing performers, but you're not trained. I am—and I'm ready to teach you. That I figured to go on the other side don't matter. I'm here now, and I'm no traitor. Somebody hinted last night that I was. Anybody care to say it now?"

Nobody did. Mr. Sloan, getting to his feet, and receiving a lightning stare from those strange old eyes, felt moved to utter a muffled "Oh, no! Not me! By no means, not me!"

"All right. 'Course, it's not nice for you to have a guy you despise giving you orders; but it seems to me that's a dislike you might swallow for the sake of your boss. I tell you—and I don't lie—that with me in command, you've got one chance in about a thousand to hold out. If you chase me out, or give me the horse laugh, the Circle R will be I.B.C. land before the end of the week."

He reached for the makings, and as he rolled, looked, smiling, at the men around him.

"That's all," he added, snapping the match in volplaning curves through the air. "Suit yourselves."

"You won't sell us out?" asked Mr. Sloan doubtfully.

A slow flush crawled up John Arnold's cheeks. Then, dropping his hand from the gun butt on which it had rested, he laughed. "Get a new nose, and then ask me that again," he advised.

The hand which had covered the ruin of Sloan's chief facial ornament was suddenly extended. It was red and sticky, but Arnold grasped it with an eagerness he did not trouble to conceal.

"Want me to build fence or come with you?" asked the ex-foreman.

"With me," said his successor. "And will you tell off the best fence men for the barricade?"

CHAPTER VII.

THE FATE OF THE BRUCES.

WITHIN ten minutes, one half of the pathetic garrison which aimed to hold Circle R against the powers of hundreds of men and millions of dollars, was busy on its defenses; while the other half, too scant in numbers to handle even a good-sized night herd, was riding forth undauntedly to subject the thousands of acres of ranch land to the processes of the spring round-up.

The expedition was, of course, a mere farce, as Mr. Sloan, during the first mile, took occasion to point out.

"I know it," replied John Arnold.

They rode on in silence. In roll after roll of gray-green grass land, the Circle R unfolded itself before them. As scenery, it was painfully monotonous; as a fenced cattle ranch it was, in the words of Sloan, a mighty fine open-range proposition. Furthermore, it showed here, there and everywhere, the signs of a year's neglect. Last spring and summer had been periods of open warfare, resulting in the loss of Old Boss Bruce and his son. Autumn had found the ranch disorganized, undermanned, and rather puzzled whether or

not to take Joan Bruce seriously. Winter, especially under the shadow of a very sketchy armistice, is no time for reclamation work. So the stretch of land was getting on very nicely with the process of returning to the wildness from which the most desperate efforts of two generations of Bruces had only succeeded in lifting it a little. The fences were falling; the loco luxuriating.

"I don't see any beeves, much," remarked John Arnold, on the crest of the sixth or seventh rise.

Sloan laughed bitterly. "You don't tell me you expected to?" he asked. "Why, man, whatju think these I.B.C. goofs have been doin' all winter? Stealin' our cattle, of course. We're 'way behind in our brandin', naturally; an' if we weren't, a brand or so wouldn't worry them, when they can make a runnin' iron for five cents."

"Didn't you try to stop 'em?"

"Some," said Mr. Sloan laconically, "tried to stop 'em last summer—lost twelve men an' both our bosses."

"Quit after that?"

"Say, mister. There's a live oak over there. Look at it. That big limb. There's a rope hangin' from it still. There used to be a man on the end of that rope, but he seems to have melted away. No, we didn't entirely quit; but half a dozen men can't do much guardin' on a place of this size."

They were passing under the great limb of the live oak. The men behind the leaders swerved apart to avoid the touch of the dangling reata. A pony stumbled over a long, white something that clinked like a note on a xylophone.

Arnold shuddered violently.

"Don't like it?" asked Sloan, smiling.

The melancholy eyes turned on him. "I've been too near it myself, once or twice," said the new foreman.

With unusual vivacity, the man on his right endeavored to change the subject.

"We thought, at the time," he remarked, "that that guy deserved it better'n most anybody; an' it's only because Miss Joan'd have taken the hide off us if she'd known about it, that he didn't get worse'n hanging. We thought we'd got the jasper that killed young Bruce—answered to his description. But that ain't much to go by. You'd answer the description as good as he did. So would Corliss yonder, barring his lamps. He said he wasn't, an' coupla weeks later we found he was tellin' the truth. However, he was rustlin'. No doubt of that. Funny, though. We caught him right where Bruce must ha' got killed."

Arnold looked straight ahead.

"Is that," he asked, with a rather unexpected lightsomeness, "a cow I see before me in the distance."

"It's a red bull, with one eye hurt," volunteered Corliss proudly from behind.

"We're gettin' into a bunch of gulleys soon," said Sloan. "Spurs off the hills, you know. May have a few cattle been in there, where they wouldn't be found. Say, do you know about how young Bruce got killed?"

After a considerable pause, Arnold shook his head; then, as if undecided, nodded it.

"I've heard a good deal about it," he said constrainedly.

"Yeah, from the I.B.C. people, likely," growled the big puncher. "Now listen to this, mister, an' if it don't make you a hundred per cent ours——"

"I thought we'd agreed I was that already?"

Sloan glanced sideways, and was alarmed. "Say, buddy," he protested, "don't be so all-fired quick on the trigger. I'm not nickin' you."

"All right. Go ahead, then."

Sloan collected his faculties. "Well, you see," he began, "this is the way it was. We heard the I.B.C. folks were rustlin' our stock, an' so old man Bruce an' Jim Bruce an' the rest of the bunch saddled and started to see what about it.

No, that ain't the beginnin' of it, either. 'Bout six months before that, before me or any of the bunch that's here now, was on the ranch, Jim Bruce picked up a guy that was down, out, an' drinkin', in Shelby Seat. Feller said his name was Haynes, an' that he was just out of Leavenworth for train-ticklin'. Claimed to be hell-bound, with no return ticket. Jim gave him a job on the Circle R, an' got so stuck on him, the way he talked about gratitude an' all, that when this I.B.C. trouble came up, it was Haynes he sent out to kind of scout around the other ranches in the county, an' see what was brewin'. Kind of soft, Jim was; more like his sister than his dad. Well, this here Haynes went, an' he disappeared, an' he never come back."

"Haynes, eh?" said Arnold thoughtfully.

"Yes, Haynes. Know anything of him?"

Arnold shook his head slowly. "No, never heard of him. Fire ahead with the story." There was an expression on his face which Mr. Sloan wrestled to interpret during a goodly portion of the ensuing narrative, a very strange look.

"Well—as I was sayin'—we rode out, old man Bruce, an' young Jimmy, an' the rest of us, to where we heard these I.B.C. thieves were rustling our stock—back there, just this side of that big hump in the ground, where the live oak is. Got about two hundred yards away from it, goin' quiet, so's not to disturb anybody, when bing goes a rifle from right by the oak's roots, an' a guy called Petersen falls sideways off his horse. He was ridin' alongside of young Jimmy, and there's no doubt that bullet was intended for Jim, because the next one took old man Bruce in the throat, an' the next one after that got the foreman. Say, whoever was doin' that snipin' had a quick hand on the magazine slide, an' a dirty eye for a bead, an' he knew who was who on the Circle R, too. Three shots, an' two-thirds of the officers down.

" 'Course, we fanned out then, old man Bruce, still in his saddle, tryin' to shout orders about somethin'. He was a game old devil, that one. There was no use tryin' to shoot the sniper—couldn't see him; an' the moment anybody'd start to ride him down, that guy would check out. Well, I'd just started a rush, an' got a bullet along my scalp, when I see young Jim, who'd been kind of milling around near his dad, suddenly pull his pony sideways an' start off at the devil's own gallop—back home! Well, sir, I caught a glimpse of his face, an' it was as white as a sheet, an' his eyes starin', an' wet runnin' out of the corners of his mouth. An' *I* thought he was runnin' away.

"As for old man Bruce, when he saw it, he just loosed everything an' fell off his horse. Doc Brewer said, with his throat all shot to pieces the way it was, he couldn't possibly have whispered, even; but I'm goin' to swear to you, mister, that when he seen his son turn around an' beat it, the old chap gave a regular scream—like a shot horse, I'd say; an' when we carried him back to the ranch house, his lips kept movin', kind of weak, like he was sayin' some one word, over and over again. Nobody could make anythin' outa it; but I thought it over since, an' I think he was sayin 'Coward! Coward! Coward!' See, his family settled this district, an' fought in everythin' there was goin', an'—well, you see. Well, sir, it was——"

"There's a whole bunch of steers in that coulee, there, boss," called Corliss. "Gee, there must be a thous——"

"You shut up," snarled the narrator over his shoulder. If thoughts could kill, some of the most ferocious murders in the history of crime would lie to the account of tale-tellers, interrupted at the Glory Be.

"Well, sir," continued Sloan, grasp-

ing at his tattered passion, "the old man had been a square guy all his life, an' I guess that's why he was allowed to live another twenty-four hours, in spite of Doc Brewer's sayin' he couldn't survive the night, because at about six o'clock the next day, a line rider from the Stony Springs outfit came over—the Stony Springs hadn't gone over to the I.B.C. yet—an' he'd bin to Shelby Seat that afternoon. An' while he was there, he'd seen a feller ravin' about the town, all drunk, shoutin' that he was the bad wild man from Borneo, an' that he'd fixed young Bruce's clock. 'Try to take us in the flank, would he?' shouts the feller. 'Well, where is he now? I showed him how the Indians fight, I did!' Seems he was wavin' a knife as he said it, an' finally, the sheriff took an' locked him up.

"The Stony Springs puncher went an' saw him in the lockup, an' this jasper told him all about it, shriekin' an' laughin' an' boastin' in his cell. Seems he'd been with the rustlin' party that was finishin' its work while this sniper guy held us back. Well, young Bruce hadn't run away at all. He'd just done what none of us had the brains to do. That white look on his face was rage an' what not, an' he'd swung a circle around an' gone to take that sniper in the rear. But this guy'd seen him comin' an' when poor little Jimmy crept up near the live oak, he got a bullet in the heart. 'An' I cut his throat an' scalped him, too!' yells the drunk. 'As sure as my name's Haynes, I took his hair!' 'I'll take yours, in another minute,' says the Stony Springs puncher. 'Not while he's my prisoner, you won't,' says the sheriff. 'Maybe he won't be your prisoner long,' says the Stony Springs man, ridin' off to tell us boys. An' of course, that was the sheriff's excuse for pretendin' to transfer the skunk to another jail—an' accidentally let him escape.

"Well, you heard me tell how the killer said 'Sure as my name's Haynes.' When we heard that, us all standing around in the room where old man Bruce was dyin', we give a yell that shook the ranch house; but the old man didn't care about any Haynes. All he could understand, all he cared about, was that his boy hadn't run away after all, but had been killed in action. Mister, I tell you that when he heard about his own son bein' killed in the battle like that, the old man's eyes fairly lit up with joy. It was too much for him. He tried to speak, an' he choked, an' then—he was dead, sm-sm-smilin'!"

"Who the blazes is cryin'?" demanded Corliss indignantly from behind. "I was lookin' at the beeves an' some ash got into my eye!"

Sloan, unashamed, wiped tears off his cheeks with the flat palms of his hands.

"I don't give a rap," he said defiantly, "I always blubber when I tell that story."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DRIVE.

THE little knot of riders halted to examine the coulee which the keen-eyed Corliss had pointed out a few minutes previously.

"Seem to be quite a lot of cows down there," Sloan remarked. "What goin' to do with them?"

"I don't know. Might drive 'em back to that corral near the house—you know," was Arnold's suggestion.

"Can't ship any. Railroad won't take 'em." Sloan took a reflective chew of tobacco.

"There's another railroad about twenty miles the other side of this," said Arnold, then added suddenly: "Isn't there?"

"Thirty," corrected Sloan. "Longhorn City. Couldn't drive 'em there without a lot more fightin' men than we've got, though. This county's solid I.B.C., mister."

Arnold reflected. "M'm. Couldn't be done, eh?"

"It'd take five hundred head to make it worth while," said Sloan; "an' what with them bein' so wild, mister, I dunno whether we could herd 'em back. 'Course, we could bring the rest of the boys out to-morrow an' have a shot at it, but it's a long way——"

"Have to be done to-day if at all," snapped Arnold. "The I.B.C.'s opening their spring campaign, don't forget. One day's liable to make the difference between whether we find some cattle, or none. What's that?"

Over the landscape there had brooded a vast, empty silence whose completeness was not impaired by the sounds of the advancing horses. The soft thud-thud of hoofs on short grass, the creak and strain of cinches and saddles, the occasional clink of a stirrup or buck hook against a buckle, the rattle of spurs, were silence to these men who spent their lives ahorse, just as the roar of trains, the rumble of wagons, the whine of elevators, and the thud of footsteps over his head, are, from long usage, inaudible to the city dweller. But as the faintest new addition to the grand chorus of metropolitan cacophony will strike the hardened flat inhabitant as a noise, so did the small sound as of something dropped in the blue-domed immensity of the prairie, cause the cavalcade to halt, listen, and analyze. It was not long before they recognized the sound.

"Shootin'?" asked Sloan.

The distant "spat" sounded again, its sharp note burdened now, to the more careful ear, with a tiny undertone that deepened it.

"It is shootin'," said one of the men. "Rifle."

Arnold drew his Winchester from its scabbard, glanced at the dented stock, remembered the plugged muzzle, and slipped it back again.

"Look! Look!" cried Corliss suddenly. "Up there on the butte! The guy that was shootin's got up. We're outa range from there."

"We ain't *all* human telescopes," snapped Sloan. "Where is he? What is he?"

"Why, dog bite my ear off! Some big guy! He's shakin' his fist. Can't you see him? Now he's off. He's outa sight. Say——"

Arnold turned around in his saddle. His face was pale and set. "Listen, boys," he said, "that means we'll have to get those beeves away to-day—if there's enough of them to make it worth while. That big fellow was one of the bunch that tried to kidnap Miss Joan last night. I laid him kicking, but he's come to, apparently. Now he's either been shooting our stock from the top of that butte, or scouting 'em out, so that a gang can come drive them."

"Phew!" said Sloan, pushing his hat over his eyes and scratching the back of his head as he surveyed the distant stock. "That'll be some day's work, buddy, take it from me!"

"If you don't want to try it," said Arnold slowly, "I can't make you."

"Who said I didn't want to try it? Just as soon be trampled to death as go any other way. You boys would, too, wouldn'tcha?"

"It'll be fun," said Corliss sadly.

"There's five of us here. One at each corner and one for boss rider—we ought to do it. It's no larger than a good many beef cuts."

"But, oh, so much wilder!" said Sloan. "I suppose you want to ride boss?"

"I don't want to shirk it."

There was a scarcely audible grunt of approval. If anything went wrong, if the herd, once started toward its corral, should suddenly decide that, having enjoyed its freedom so long, it would not submit to human domination in this instance, there would be trouble for all, but certain death for the leader of the herd, riding ahead, right in the path of the stampede.

It was fairly obvious to the experts that this man with the old eyes was not a cattle man, though being in Texas, he certainly knew the perils menacing even the most hardened and experienced of boss riders in a drive. In accepting, as he was not compelled to, the risk attached to his foremanship, Arnold was acting as the four men with him had begun to expect that he would, and nothing gratifies humanity so much as having its expectations fulfilled.

Without further words, the cutting out began. There was not a man of the five but had had his experiences of hardship, winter and summer on the range. It was to be seen, as soon as the cut began, that Arnold, though lacking the finished technique born of long, continuous practice, had punched cows at some time in his career. Furthermore, there was not a man of the five but admitted, when at last a ragged herd was on the move, that this struggle in the shadow of the foothills surpassed anything of which he had dreamed in his wildest nightmare. There was something superhuman about it.

Not that it was at all spectacular, save at isolated moments, as when Corliss' pony, scuttling to head off a stampeding bunch, stepped in a gopher hole and flung his rider straight in the path of the advancing steers. Then it was Sloan who, with both guns going, and with vocal bellows enough to wake the dead, managed to swerve the stampede the few feet which saved the telescopic gentleman's life. Arnold and the other three men were up coulees, choking in the dust which made their ponies' lather into mud, engaged in the monotonous yet perilous task of driving out cattle not accustomed to be driven, quite satisfied where they were, and possessed with a fiendish determination, once they had been dislodged, to slip back, past the cursing man and cavorting pony in the dust cloud, back to their old grazing ground.

The work started at eleven in the morning; and, to be briefer than the subject deserves, continued without interruption until nearly five in the afternoon. There was no stop for food, because there was no food. Each man had water in his canteen—lukewarm water, full of dust, which he drank sparingly, ahorse. To stop for rest was impossible. Even a few minutes' relaxation of watchfulness over that quicksilverlike herd would have undone the work of hours.

The net result of all the torture the five had undergone—thirst, choking, semiblindness from the constant watching of milling beeves in the bright light—was disappointing. One man could work a coulee fairly well; but for two men, however expert, to bunch and handle the strays as they came lolloping, charging or slinking into the open, in ones, twos, fives, dozens, wild and ferocious, was impossible.

Largely by good luck, however, the first reddening of the sun found a bunch of seven or eight hundred head fairly close together; upon which Sloan, firing three shots rapidly in the air, followed by a second three, summoned the men from the draws, and gave the order to "tuck 'em in."

When the stragglers had been pushed into formation, and the whole herd bullied into a shambling, irregular movement in the general direction of the Circle R corral, he dropped back from his position at the head of the column, to where Arnold, haggard with fatigue, was riding flank, and abruptly suggested a swap of positions.

"You better get up ahead, mister," he gasped hoarsely. "If I know cows, this lot's goin' to spread rather'n stampede. Don't let your hawse fall down, though. Try breathin' through your handkerchief in another place. It's solid mud where you got it now. Ah, would you, you——?"

He dashed away to head off a young

steer endeavoring to leave the ranks. "Git up ahead, or they'll be away from us!" his voice came back faintly, as he spurred farther down the cloud-enveloped herd to rowel his right spur against the nose of another aspirant for liberty.

So they proceeded, though what seemed like interminable miles of flat lands, sagebrush, and dust—dust—dust. It was only the same distance as they had cheerfully ridden out that morning; but to the exhausted men, the earth under their ponies' feet seemed like a treadmill, the journey endless. They were nervously tired out, really hysterical, though they showed none of the conventional signs of the condition.

Even purgatory, however, is subject to the operation of time, and at last the voice of Corliss, cracked and wavering, rose in a dismal howl which announced approaching relief from torment. For a moment, from the brow of the hillock on which stood the live oak with its dangling rope, the Circle R ranch house hove in sight, to be instantly swallowed up, with its barns and its inviting corral, as the herd swooped down the slope.

"Speed 'em up!" yelled Sloan, at the foot of the next ascent.

Like the other men, he was probably hungry for another glimpse of the building which marked the goal of this excessively fool enterprise, of which, in his heart, he was prouder than of anything save his capture of the bucking belt at Longhorn City in '08. But his order had a more important purpose. Cattle, when excited, will go into things which their cooler judgment would cause them to avoid, and in Mr. Sloan's opinion, a wild bunch like this would regularly need stampeding into the corral, the bars of which, he earnestly prayed, would be let down in time by the fence-building garrison of the ranch. If not, there would be beef jelly in plenty, without the assistance of a factory. However, that was no concern of his.

"Ready, mister?" he howled at Arnold's back, and saw an arm raised in assent. "Then whoop 'em up this hill, boys! Hi-ya! Start 'em rollin'! 'Roll them tails, an' roll 'em high, We'll all be angels by and by.' Get back, you blanked cow, you! Hi-ya! Shoot 'em up: Hi-yip!"

With undignified haste, and with a conglomerate expression of earnest viciousness, the herd changed step, and as it surmounted the crest of the undulation, the rear ranks were shoving and shouldering the bovine leaders in their eagerness.

"Look out!" yelled Sloan, "You in the lead! Shake your dogs! They're climbin'!"

The first symptom of the grand rush that was to end in the corral, merged into the second, as the front of the herd, snorting, bellowing, and rolling its tails as requested by the flank rider, put on speed and drew away from the rear ranks. For a moment, there was a gap between the two sections; then it closed, and the herd thundered forward as a whole.

"Hi-yi-yip! Get back, you son of perdition. Hey, you in the lead, you wall-eyed——"

For the first few moments after the swing over the last hill brow, Sloan had been watching his flank, prepared to stimulate or repress as occasion should demand. Now he turned his face forward to see how John Arnold was making out.

He gave a gasp of horror, which an instant later he dimly heard echoed from behind him by three shouts of dismay and warning.

"Look after the herd!" Sloan yelled at the top of his voice, scarcely knowing what he said, and himself, with the automatic action of a man thoroughly versed in his job, spurred forward to take Arnold's place in the van.

CHAPTER IX.

AN IDENTIFICATION.

WHAT Sloan had seen was this: Five hundred yards away, there was riding toward them a cavalcade of perhaps a dozen men, spread out behind a leader. Ahead of this cavalcade, fleeing from it with three hundred yards' start, Joan Bruce had been riding, when her horse stumbled. Now, while the animal struggled to regain its feet, she lay still, straight in the path of the stampeding herd, which as John Arnold spurred his pony forward to her rescue, put on speed and followed its leader at a terrifying gallop.

"Work 'em over to the left!" shrieked Sloan, driving his left spur desperately against the beef on the right forward corner of the flying herd.

He glanced ahead again. Then, with lightning motion, he dropped a hand to his belt and drew the gun not discharged in recalling the rounders-up. Arnold was halfway to the girl and starting to bend over in his saddle, as if to attempt snatching her up from the ground. That would pull his arms out of their sockets, and they would both be trampled to death. The maddened herd was gaining on the weary horse.

Taking a desperate chance, Sloan jammed the muzzle of his revolver against a steer's forehead and fired. The animal, stumbling to its knees and rolling sideways, nearly cut the feet from under his pony; but after a moment's eddying and bellowing about the writhing carcass, the herd swung away from the obstruction, ever so little to the left. Too desperate to rejoice, Sloan fired again, but not with the same result. This time he did not kill, and the infuriated steer, swerving its rush with incredible agility, was on him. He fired again, and the brute dropped its head, fell to its knees, and blundered against its slayer's pony. Horse and man rolled in the dust.

The herd, in a frenzy, increased its speed, and at this moment, when the thundering hoofs which in all probability would chop him to pieces, were a bare thirty yards behind him, Arnold grabbed for the Sage Hen's belt. There was every chance in the world that Jinny, foot-weary and staggering, would strike her hoof on that auburn head, which was almost under her, as her master reached for his grip. There was every chance that the belt, designed to support a light gun and a couple of dozen cartridges, would snap; it seemed impossible that the eye, arm, and leg muscles of any man could bring off the miracle of coöperation necessary for this rescue.

Yet they did. The hoofs missed and the belt held. Jinny felt a sudden weight added to her burden, her cinches twisted agonizingly by a strange one-sided force, something heavy and limp and brushing against her knees.

Then, almost in the same instant it seemed, the usually gentle hand of her master jammed the bit cruelly back and to the right, so that she perforce sunfished in her own length; the spurs were driven into her sides, so that she leaped forward like a cat in torture; and then —something blunt and irresistible cannoned against her shoulder, knocking her clear off her feet. There was a smother of dust, rolling over and over in which, the little pony remembered, while wondering if this was the end of the equine world, that in a fall such as this, she must by no means lash out with her hoofs.

John Arnold had won out by just that fraction of a second in which a fast pony, hard-spurred, can cover the distance between a steer's breast and shoulder. The herd, led by the right-flank steer which had spilled Jinny and her burdens, thundered away past the corral and the ranch house, toward the boundaries of the I.B.C.'s subsidiary, the Lazy F. They were gone forever.

Sloan and the three other punchers, sweating and dust-whitened, rode up simultaneously with the men who had been chasing Joan Bruce, to find Arnold lying with his arms flung out to protect the head of the awakening girl. He was quite unconscious, and though they did not know it, dreaming—strange dreams, such as one experiences only in a faint, in a coma, or following the keen, cold whiff of ether; strange choking dreams of bondage, of a little cell, not enough air, and dark, very dark, with a strange, close smell.

There ought to have been light shining through the little barred window, high up in the wall; there ought to have been sounds from the other cells. Yes, there was somebody banging his door. No, that was the blood in his ears. And the bed—he was lying on the bed; it was hard and lumpy. Why couldn't he feel the rasp of the coarse blanket, with its flecks of fiber sticking out like bristles from the wool? It must be morning soon. Then the light would come through the window. But there ought to be a star visible, even at night, or a patch of sky, lighter against the darkness. Where was the window? This wasn't his own cell. He was in a strange place—a strange cell! Why, in Heaven's name, wouldn't it get light?

"Steady, steady!" came a voice from a great distance.

That was the warder. Now the light was breaking. Oh, to be out and free. He made a violent effort and sat up.

"Take it easy," said the voice, now close at hand. "Steady, now. Plenty of time."

"That's him," said another voice.

Arnold saw a circle of dim figures around him, tried to rise, and with the aid of an arm behind him, accomplished the feat. Suddenly his eyes snapped back into focus. Who were these ugly-looking jaspers in front of him? There was Sloan, and the other two boys. Corliss was holding him up. He smiled at Joan Bruce, and then suddenly stopped smiling. His eyes had fallen on the left breast of the coat of the man nearest to him. A sheriff's star!

"Hello!" said Arnold unsteadily.

"Hello," said the sheriff. "What's your name?"

There was a silence.

Sloan broke in. His usually ruddy face was pale and set; the big, knotted hand resting on the butt of his right-hand gun trembled.

"Buddy," he said slowly, "I don't believe it about you—not if this guy here identified you a thousand times. He's gone over to the I.B.C. himself, with the rest of the Stony Springs outfit."

"You sneer at me——" began the tall lean man who had said "That's him!"

"Shut up," said the sheriff.

Sloan turned on him. "You tell *me* to shut up, you yellow-backed coyote," he said through his teeth, "an' I'll take an' ram your star down your throat, posse or no posse. If you're here on the straight, you ain't necessary. The Circle R can look after its own business. An' if you're here to frame this guy up, look out!" He turned to Arnold. "Buddy, I kind o' took a fancy to you. For Heaven's sake, tell me you ain't what he says you are. For if you are, by thunder, I'll shoot you where you stand."

"What's that?" asked Arnold. Suddenly, the melancholy eyes had begun to wander. Jinny was perhaps five yards away, standing with bowed head, yet with eyes brightened by her twenty minutes of rest and of rolling, as well as her saddle, permitted, in the sand. The sun was well down on the horizon. Half an hour more, and the day would have shaded abruptly into the semi-tropical night.

"What's that?" he repeated.

Sloan opened his mouth, then turned to the sheriff. "You can tell him!" he roared. "It's your dirty job, not mine."

"Your name is John Arnold?"

"Yes."

"Formerly known as Midge Carlton, "Sad" Jim Connery, and *Walter Haynes?*"

There was an appalling silence.

"Released after two years' imprisonment in Leavenworth Penitentiary, for train-robbing, under the name of *Walter Haynes?*"

No answer.

"For the love of——" began Sloan hoarsely. Behind him, the Sage Hen, white as a sheet, clasped her hands.

"What's the use of all this?" demanded the lean puncher from Stony Springs. "I tell you I know him. He's the guy I seen in Shelby Seat jail, tellin' about how he done for Jim Bruce an' ——"

Joan Bruce gave a gaint scream.

"You shut up," said Sloan to the lean man.

The sheriff, one hand at his belt, the other coming out of a pocket above whose edge showed an ominous corner of legal blue paper, began to speak slowly. "Assuming you to be the person mentioned in this warrant, I arrest you——"

"Arnold!" cried Joan Bruce, pushing forward.

The big man with the sad eyes looked at her. "Yes, miss?"

The girl glanced quickly around the circle which inclosed them. Her hair, loose, flowed over her shoulders; her eyes were wide, her cheeks flushed. Under the torn khaki of her riding-dress, her bosom fluttered rapidly.

"Arnold—you've saved my life; I don't believe what this man has been saying about you. I don't believe you're the traitor that killed my brother. If you say it's untrue, we shall not let him take you. I think it is a trick to rob us of another man. I have said I would never fight the law in this business; but if trickery is the law, I will fight it!"

Sloan and Corliss growled. The other punchers from the Circle R—the fence-builders, who had joined the gathering around the unconscious form of John Arnold, and who now stood, by strange coincidence, each next to a man of the sheriff's posse—moved uneasily. There was a faint, pervasive rattle of steel against leather—the steel of gun barrels against the cowhide of holsters.

"This is no business for women," growled the sheriff, stepping forward.

"You'll find it is," blazed Joan Bruce.

The peace officer's eyes had been searching Arnold's face. "All right," he said. "Let's see what you've got. On information received that you are the person named in this warrant, I arrest you, Walter Haynes, alias John Arnold, for the willful murder of James Bruce."

A silence.

"Say something!" croaked Sloan out of a dry throat. "Say you ain't him! for Heaven's sake, say it!"

Again Arnold glanced about him.

"Why should I say that?" he asked, in a strange, quiet voice. "I am Walter Haynes!"

Sloan's hand, paralyzed, did not move on his gun butt. "Then you didn't kill him!" he whispered. "Say that, an' we'll clean 'em up. After—after he'd befriended you! You couldn't!"

"I did."

"You're trying to save us—the fight," said Joan Bruce, shrinking. "Upon your oath——"

They saw Arnold's teeth sink into his lip. "Upon my honor!" he said, and turning seemed to hold out his wrists for the handcuffs.

Only seemed to do so, however, because, before Sloan, with a bellow of rage, could pull his gun, before the sheriff could so much as reach for the polished steel bracelets at his belt, the humble outstretching of these powerful arms had changed into a hungry clutch which seized the sheriff by the waist, wrenched him off his feet, and hurled him, broadside on, to knock Sloan and three other

men flying. Another man who had drawn a gun felt his senses detonate and leave him, as a fist drove his jaw backward and up.

Then, scrambling for his seat on Jinny, spurring hard, regardless of the shots which whined over him, John Arnold fled into the gathering dusk.

There were three events worthy of note, during what remained of the second twenty-four hours of Arnold's second sojourn in the United States:

The posse followed him until the darkness covered him, and he was lost in the mazes of the Shelby County hills.

At ten o'clock, an unknown mob, headed by a gigantic, swarthy desperado, attacked the Circle R ranch house and was beaten off from the half-finished barricade with the loss of two dead and one wounded. Joan Bruce fought by the side of her men. Sloan, at every shot into the hostile darkness, gritted through his teeth: "That's for you, Haynes!"

David Grant, riding from Shelby Seat, where he had heard rumors, to the assistance of the garrison, met the returning posse a mile from where the battle was quite audibly raging and was arrested for an imaginary, projected, or nonexistent disturbance of the peace. He was handcuffed, fettered, and locked in the Shelby Seat jail.

One more thing—a consequence of these events. After reports had been made to him, Mr. Rigby, in his suite at the Shelby Hotel, might have been seen to smile pleasantly, and rub his long, rather moistly sticky hands.

CHAPTER X.

FOR JINNY'S SAKE.

MR. HENRIK IBSEN, the well-known Scandinavian dramatist, has laid it down as a law that no man in his right mind ever talks to himself; which statement, though sensational, proves nothing, except that Mr. Henrik Ibsen, the well-known Scandinavian dramatist, had never punched cattle, or been alone much under any other distressing circumstances.

John Arnold was positively telegraphic, but he spoke to himself nevertheless. To be exact, he sat, two hours later, on a rock high up in the Shelby County hills, stared down into the dusk which was beginning to enfold Three Pines Valley, and remarked:

"Well, that's torn it."

After which he was silent, save for a sharp "Shut up!" to his pony, as she nosed among the loose stones of the hillside in the vain hope of finding something edible.

She deserved the best of the best, that pony, after the mad scramble she'd had, with a raving, shooting, hard-riding posse at her heels, and it was not the least of John Arnold's troubles, that there was nothing for her. The fodder-bag had contained so few grains that her first eager snuffles had emptied it; and now she stood sweating, scratched, blown, and with fetlocks sore from flying pebbles—minus even a drink of water. To forage, before dark, in these hills which the pursuers knew, and the fugitive didn't, would be suicidal.

"Wonder what that is?" Arnold demanded, just in time to cover a hurt, appealing whicker from behind him.

The setting sun had expended its last ray on a line of bright copper wire which, after tortuous bends near the hills, ran to Three Pines, and thence cut straight away, in a bee line for Longhorn City. It was rather strange that the man on the hill should have noticed the telephone line at that moment; for just then it was carrying a conversation of considerable interest to him. Old Bill Garfield, sitting in his International Emporium & Sheriff's Office, was, in fact, squandering thirty cents on a talk with Willie Masters, the ranger captain who made Longhorn City his headquarters.

"I think, Willie," the old gentleman was saying, "that it's high time something was done about it, and that's what!"

"What's what?"

"Whattamean?"

"I mean," said Willie Masters, who had just come in, and was being watched, with hot, dull eyes, by four Mexican gentlemen in handcuffs, whom he had brought with him, "I mean, Bill, what's to be done about it? Have you any suggestions, or are you just talking for the sake of talking? Hurry! I'm sweating, and I want my supper."

"Well——" said Mr. Garfield slowly.

"I may's well tell you," said Willie Masters, wiping his forehead on the transmitter, "that I've got orders to do nothing, on the ground that it's the county's business. They've probably misrepresented things to the chief."

"Oh," said Mr. Garfield; and then, after a moment. "Well, good-by!"

"By!" said Mr. Masters, hanging up, and taking off his shirt.

"That's ripped it wide open, all right," said the brooding outlaw as appositely as if he had heard the ranger captain remove Joan Bruce's last hope of legal protection. However, he was repeating his comment on his own circumstances only, and consideration of them brought into the front of his mind the still harder plight of his little mare. She had made a gallant effort to be uncomplaining, but she was all in. As her master turned from his survey of the gloaming valley so far below and looked at her, she drooped her muzzle against the cool surface of a rock, and swaying where she stood, began to whimper pitifully.

Arnold's hand, when he laid it on her neck, was clenched hard.

"Buck up, old lady," he said through his teeth. "Cheero, now. 'Course, if it's as bad as that, we'll have to do something. Why didn't you say so before?"

The pony whinnied and tried to toss her head as she was accustomed to do when her lord petted her. But she staggered and almost fell. Arnold, who had not the loose mouth of the habitual swearer, ripped out an appalling oath. In fear of surprise, he had left the saddle on the pony. Now, he unsaddled her and threw the costly burden on the ground.

"Now then, sweetie," he said. "Take a deep breath and get your legs moving. There's going to be a full horse or a dead man pretty soon, one or the other. That's right—roll!"

Freed, the mare had picked out a little sandy spot and flung herself down. She rolled twice—three times, made a lashing attempt to roll clean over, failed, and at the fourth roll, got to her feet. She stood, mud-caked now, but obviously feeling better.

"You got a mutt of a boss, leaving you saddled that way," said Arnold. "But come on. We'll do better in future."

He snapped his fingers, clicking his tongue, and started forward, the mare following him with ears pricked hopefully.

"I don't know——" the man muttered, and then stopped.

Far away, apparently from a spot higher up the hills, and a considerable distance south of the point at which he stood, the red glow of a fire showed against the hanging ceiling of mist and darkness.

For a whole minute, the hunted man stood motionless, staring at the faint ruddy nimbus, realizing fully what it meant to him in danger. Then the animal at his elbow sighed wearily.

Without another moment of hesitation, John Arnold started toward the fire.

To be continued in next week's issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.

Stet's Lucky Bump

by

Frederick C. Davis

ONE moment Stetson Boone was jogging serenely along the road on the back of his pinto; an instant later he was sprawling in the dust of the road, unconscious and inert.

It happened so quickly that Stet could not have prevented it. His eyes had been shifting unseeingly over the brown haze of the baking road, and had not noticed a slight movement amid the foliage of a tree under which he was about to pass. As he rode directly beneath a protruding bough, a form dropped out, fell heavily upon him, toppled him from his saddle, and threw him to the road, his senses inert.

Void minutes passed. When Stet's eyes opened, he was immediately aware of a sharp, aching throb at the back of his head. He sat up, blinked, looked around him, and tried to deduce the cause of his sudden descent into the dust. His assailant evidently had taken to the bushes and disappeared, and Stet had only a vague recollection of a pair of deeply black eyes which had flashed for an instant into his before he lost consciousness.

Gingerly he pressed his fingers around the base of his skull. He found a good-sized bump in the process of forming where his hatband should be. It pained sharply.

Then he realized that his hat was gone. His hat! Where was it? In his dazed state, the loss of this comparatively unimportant part of his apparel became momentous, and he looked feverishly around him. Not seeing it, he scrambled up, swaying a trifle. He skirted the edges of the road, searching for his missing headgear. His extraordinary anxiety about his hat was due to a certain attachment that he felt for it. Years before, a stray bullet during a gun fight had zipped through the air in the direction of Stet Boone, and had ripped away six square inches of scalp, with the result that, when the wound healed, he was left with a bare spot on the top of his head, which was impossible to conceal even by manipulating the remainder of his stubborn hirsute crop. Stet had henceforth become a bald man with a geometrically square bald spot. His strange head became an object of jest and derision to the other cowmen, so that he soon took to wearing his hat continually, for it was the one and only means of effectively hiding his disfigurement. He never removed his hat unless it was absolutely necessary. On the rare occasion when he did, cowmen pointed to

the rectangular bald spot on the top of his head and guffawed. Stet's sensitive nature was provoked by this ridicule almost to the point of murder, but he curbed his resentment and contented himself with ineffectual profanity, which incurred more laughter. So it came that Stetson Boone acquired his monicker—his hat forever adorned his head.

He wore it all day. He refused to take it off when he entered a house or met a woman or took grub, etiquette notwithstanding. He also wore it when he slept in the same room with others. Some said the thing had grown to his head through such close, continued intimacy with it; but the accident with which he had met this torrid afternoon disproved this fanciful theory. For Stet's hat had disappeared.

He glanced around the road, irately, but failed to locate it. He fingered through his stiff hair, ran over his bald spot, and painfully investigated the rapidly increasing altitude of the bump on the back of his head. His hair was heavy at that spot, and hid the swollen protuberance, but undeniably there was a mountainous bump there, as both the pain and Stet's searching fingers disclosed. He moaned. The bump was increasing in painfulness with its growth. His head felt thrice its normal size and crowded closely with concentrated pain which, it seemed, devils of the air were trying to pack even closer by rhythmic blows of sledgehammers upon the back of his skull.

He wondered why he had been the subject of the unprovoked attack from above. He learned, after a brief inventory, that his personal belongings, including his money, were untouched, with the solitary exception of his hat. Only his hat was missing. To Stet this was an indication that he was bearing the brunt of a practical joke, and that his hat had been stolen to enforce the display of his queer bald spot. When Stet would return to the town of Whippit, toward which he was bound when so rudely interrupted, what sport the other cowmen would enjoy at his expense! How they would joke about the bare rectangle on his head, point him out to laughing women, and set the children to shouting, "Baldy! Baldy!" after him. But a gleam of shrewdness came into his eyes. They thought they would get a laugh on him, did they? Well, he'd fool 'em!

His natural sagacity came into play. He climbed into his saddle again, and reversed his pinto. He had been traveling from Junction to Whippit, where he had intended to buy a bottle of guaranteed hair tonic, but he decided to return to Junction. There were no stores, except incompletely stocked general ones, in Whippit; whereas at Junction several merchants kept a large stock. Toward one of these stores Stet moved.

At Junction he swung down in front of a dry-goods merchant's, and steeling himself against the curious gazes directed at his disfigured pate, strode directly to the counter.

"Gimme a hat," he said, "and gimme it quick."

The storekeeper slid a new gray hat out on the counter, and Stet attempted to pull it over his head.

"Too small," he said. "Hurry up and gimme another'n."

The storekeeper selected a larger size and proffered it to Stet.

"Still too small," said Stet, after trying it on. "You think I'm a pinhead? Gimme the right size this time, will yah?"

The storekeeper, frowning uncertainly, drew out the largest hat in stock. Stet pulled it over his head. It fitted. He paid for the hat and, with his grotesque scalp now comfortably hidden from sight, walked from the building to his pinto with more ease than he had felt when entering.

He directed his pinto back toward Whippit. The new hat pressed his bump rather irritatingly, but otherwise it fitted nicely. He was proud of his new property; it had cost him a big slice of his wages. As he rode from Junction to the hills just outside Whippit, he felt elated that he had outwitted the "ornery little fool" who had planned such a "low-down trick" on him.

He came to the crest of the hills which overlooked Whippit. Looking down, he saw a group of five horsemen riding with high speed over the road away from the town. Their rapid pace aroused his curiosity. As the horsemen drew closer, they slowed, and when they came within a rod, they reigned their mounts to a halt, stopped short, and stared queerly at him, their eyes seeming to rest with particular interest on his new hat.

Then the leader of the group suddenly jerked out a six-shooter and leveled it at Stet.

"Hello!" Stet exclaimed. "Why all this sweet welcome for me, Rogers? I knew you boys liked me, but this shore overcomes me with emotion!"

The men sneered.

"Cut out the lip!" Rogers ordered curtly. "Trying a little nerve on us, are you?"

Rogers' eyes fastened upon the new headpiece which adorned Stet, and he glanced significantly at the others.

"Just ride right on," he invited grimly. "Keep on goin', Stet. We just come to see you back home."

"What in Moses' name is the matter with you boys?" Stet demanded curiously. "Put that shootin' iron away, will you, Rogers?"

"Don't ask no favors of me, Stet, please!" Rogers sneered, and added sharply, "I said cut out the lip and move on!"

Stet attempted to draw an explanation of this strange attitude from the other cowmen; they offered no explanation, however, but commanded him to ride on. He spurred his pinto, and moved on toward Whippit. A ranchman rode on each side of him; three pounded close behind him; it was a guard's formation. Since questioning brought no information from the cowmen, he succumbed to silence and wonder. Why had these men ridden out to meet him; and why were they so grim and tightlipped? Why had Rogers covered him with a gun? Stet was unable to find a logical explanation for these actions.

During the ride back to town he was painfully aware of the continued presence of the bump on the back of his head.

When the party of six horsemen reached the edge of the town, other cowmen, seeing Stet, exclaimed hoarsely and ran forward, surrounding him.

"So you got the dirty coyote, did you?"

"String him up!" some one shouted.

"String him up!" echoing cries came.

Stet's eyebrows arched in surprise. "What you-all talkin' about, boys?" he asked uneasily.

The riders who surrounded him remained stolid and speechless, although Stet again attempted to draw an explanation of this affair from them. The horses jogged through the main street of Whippit, as men shouted curses at him, women pointed accusing fingers at him, and children gathered fearfully around their mothers' skirts. He saw these reactions with blank-faced wonder. Why should men damn him, women jibe at him, and children grow afraid in his presence? Why were these men on horses surrounding him so grim-faced and solemn? A group of men and women had gathered, and were trailing after the horses; why did they eye him angrily and gesticulate toward him? This was no joke; Stet was convinced of that. He was completely dis-

abused of the idea that had first come to him.

"Boys," he attempted again, "what's ailin' you?"

But again he was given no answer. The group paused before a small building which had once been occupied by a traveling evangelist and a branch of the Salvation Army, but which was used now, for want of a tenant, as town hall. The horsemen dismounted and dragged Stet from his saddle. Several of them gripped his arms with fingers of steel.

"Let go o' me!" he commanded, but instead of complying the fingers dug deeper into his arms.

"Better keep quiet!" Rogers warned him. "Everything you say will be used against you."

Men bore Stet into the hall. Down an aisle, between disarranged chairs, they went. He was forced upon a platform. Men filed in behind, eying him belligerently. He answered their harsh looks with surprised stares. Rogers pushed him into a seat which faced the assembly. Soon the hall was filled to overflowing; women and children craned heads into the door at the end of the assembly room. Rogers arose. With raised hands he silenced the babbling of voices.

"Court will now come to order!" he said.

Court! Stet was startled. Was he on trial? And if so, for what crime?

"Men," Rogers said, "Sheriff Tompkins is out o' town, but he's comin' back at sundown, and we got to act quick. We lucky found this black-hearted critter"—pointing to the amazed Stet—"tryin' to put on a bold face and make as though he warn't guilty, but we wouldn't let the damn sheepherder pull the wool over our eyes. We got him. We ain't goin' to stage no ordinary lynchin', now. This is goin' to be done right, so's when Tompkins comes back we can tell him, 'Looky here, we held a trial, and we found him guilty, and that's as much as any court in the world can do!"

One word rang above all the others in Stet's ears: "Lynching!"

Rogers went on: "This critter," he sneered, leveling his finger at Stet, "is a snake in the grass. He's been actin' for years like he was a good man and a friend of Sam Blake's. Yet not five hour ago he shot and killed Sam Blake in his store for a little bag of gold dust, and I tell you, men, he's got to hang for it!"

Sam Blake? "Shot and killed Sam Blake," Rogers had said. Stet attempted to rise protestingly from his chair, but heavy hands pushed him back.

"Rogers," he persisted incredulously, "is Sam Blake—dead?"

Rogers spat disgustedly, and the room broke into an uproar of sneering laughter.

"Listen to him!" Rogers rasped angrily. "Tryin' to play innocent! Tryin' to make us think he didn't sneak into Sam's store and pistol him to death, leavin' his wife and three children without any support. The dirty, ornery coyote!"

Overpowered by the numbers against him, Stet sat still, judging that to listen calmly would be the sanest thing he might do. His brain was whirling.

He searched the faces of the assembly for a glimpse of mercy. But hard, cruel, merciless faces only were turned toward him. These men thought him guilty of a killing, and were set upon his paying for the crime. As Stet's glance moved over the faces of the grim men assembled in the room, they were halted by the sight of a pair of eyes which were hauntingly familiar. The coal-black eyes, under shaggy black eyebrows, were fixed on Stet; there was a peculiar, leering light in them. The eyes fascinated Stet.

"Listen to the evidence," Rogers continued. "This is goin' to be a fair-and-square trial, and we're goin' to

listen to the evidence. I'm goin' to tell you-all what happened this afternoon. This man, Stet Boone, before grub time, left Whippit and said he was goin' to Junction. He wouldn't tell us what for. He just went. Not a long time after he was gone, he slipped into the rear end of Sam Blake's place, with his face covered by a mask, and demanded that Sam turn over all the cash and gold he's got. Sam tried to get the drop on him, but he shot first, and hit Sam square in the middle of the forehead. He grabbed the money and ran. There was nobody else in the place at the time but a helpless old woman, and I guess he thought he'd get away clean. He rode like lightning in the direction of Junction, but he left a bit of evidence behind him that's going to hang him. He left this hat!"

Rogers whipped into view an old gray Stetson. Stet jerked violently, but with an effort controlled his amazement. For the hat in Rogers' hand, which he said had been found in the place where Sam Blake had been murdered, was Stet's own!

"This is Stet Boone's hat!" Rogers shouted. "It ain't got no marks on it, but it sure looks like Stet Boone's hat, and it *is* his hat. I can prove it, because there he sits wearin' a brand-new hat to take the place of this one he lost when he shot Sam. Why, men, he rode in the direction of Junction so's he could buy a new hat; and when he was doublin' back on his trail we caught him! Men, is there anybody doubts Stet Boone's guilt?"

A roar of "No! No! No!" answered.

Rogers again stilled the uproar, and turned to Stet, whose mind now was racing at lightning speed. He was accused of the murder of Sam Blake; but he was innocent. He must establish an alibi, or suffer to be hung by the neck until dead. To tell these men the truth of the affair, he at once realized, would be folly; they would disbelieve, laugh, jeer, hoot him down. Yet he must establish a strong alibi. His own hat had been found on the scene of the killing; he had been apprehended wearing a new one; and this was damning evidence in the eyes of the mob before him.

As Rogers turned to Stet, he said, "Let's hear what the prisoner's got to say for himself!"

As Stet arose, his mind was busy. His life depended upon his establishing an alibi, but his thought processes were jumbled. His mind was struggling to recollect where he had seen before that pair of jet-black eyes which were staring at him from the maze of faces in front of him. Stet gazed at the eyes and tried to pierce the haze which surrounded their memory. The excited pumping of blood through the bump on the back of his head caused it to throb with added soreness. A lightning flash of thought, aroused by this stab of pain, solved both problems for Stet.

Now he remembered where he had seen those eyes! When the unknown person had dropped from the tree and knocked him into the road, he had caught one swift glance of the face of the assailant; he remembered now how, just before his senses had been dashed from him, he had been impressed by a pair of raven-black eyes which had flashed into his. These black eyes were the eyes of Stet's attacker! They were the eyes of the man who had killed Sam Blake!

Stet was dazed by a whirlwind of realizations. In the very same room with him was the man who had committed the crime of which he was unjustly accused. That man had stolen Stet's hat and had left it on the scene of the crime so that suspicion might fasten upon an innocent man. Yet this crowd was gripped by the conviction that Stet was the guilty man; they

were bent upon taking Stet's life in justification for a crime he had not committed. His problem was a ticklish one: he must prove himself innocent, and in order to establish beyond all doubt that he was guiltless, he must corner the real murderer, who was even then in the room, and wring a confession from him. How could he do this, with every man against him?

As he moved slowly forward on the platform, his shrewd mind had evolved a course of escape. He straddled his legs, clenched his fists, and glowered at the crowd.

"Men," he growled, "if you're aimin' to lynch me without a fight you're goin' to get a surprise!"

At this alarming statement men bent forward. Several of them, their jaws grimly set, stepped into the doorway and thus blocked it. Others, for the same reason, stationed themselves before the windows of the building. Rogers, seeing these movements, encouraged them:

"That's it, boys! Block the door! Block the windows!"

Hard-faced men now barred every exit from the building. And, although Stet's brutal expression did not vary, inwardly he rejoiced. For he had accomplished a part of his purpose. He did not himself intend to try to battle his way out, but he had succeeded in closing every exit, so that the black-eyed murderer in the crowd could not escape!

"Now, boys," he said more calmly, "you think I killed Sam Blake. I'd swear to you on a stack of Bibles that I didn't even know Sam was killed until I heard Rogers say so, right now. I was in Junction most of the day. Boys, I just didn't kill Sam Blake, that's all."

The crowd sneered at him. "Prove it!"

Some one threw a coil of rope onto the platform. Promptly Rogers picked it up and unlooped it; immediately the front edge of the crowd started menacingly forward, but Rogers waved them back.

"Let him talk until he's through, boys! We're in no hurry to give him this purty necktie!"

Stet faced them again. "Because this here hat was found in Sam's place," he said, "you think I did the killin'. You're all plain, everyday fools. Just because I buy a new hat you think I killed a man. You idjits! Why, that hat that Rogers has got there won't even fit me. Because it ain't mine!"

The hat *was* Stet's—but he was playing a gamble.

"And to prove it," he shouted, "I'll try it on!"

He removed his new hat. He took the old one from Rogers and put it on his head. It sat high. He gripped its edges and pulled downward upon it, attempting to make it fit. He pulled until the felt stretched, but still it would not slide down upon his head. For all to see, it perched grotesquely high on his cranium, patently, undeniably, conclusively far too small to fit him.

"So!" he cried. "What more do you want? What does that show? Why, you got the wrong party, that's what! Now, gimme my own hat back here!"

He snatched his new adornment from Rogers' hand, and pulled it over his head. It slipped easily and nicely to its proper position.

The crowd sat silent. It was apparent that the old hat, which they had considered damning evidence against Stet, was nothing of the sort. It did not even fit him. They did not know, however, that it was the large bump which had formed on the back of Stet's head which had prevented his old hat from settling into its proper position. They did not know that the new hat fitted correctly only because he had bought it *after* he had acquired the bump. Stet blessed the fate which had placed that mound under his heavy

thatch of hair, and rejoiced in every throb of pain it caused him.

Rogers looked over the silent assembly sheepishly. "It looks, boys," he said, "like we shore have made fools outa ourselves. This hat sure can't belong to Stet. Stet can't be the man that killed Sam, then. We're all wrong, boys, and I guess we shore do owe Stet an apology."

The tension of the room was relaxing, and men were beginning to move toward the door, but Stet's startling shout stopped them:

"Don't move from that door! Stay by the windows, men!"

They paused, uncertain.

"Stick to your posts!"

Stet had noticed a stealthy movement among the crowd. A man with coal-black eyes had attempted to slip unnoticed into the aisle.

"Stay by those windows and doors!" he shouted again. "Because the man who killed Sam Blake is in this room, right now!"

The room was deadly still. Stet stepped off the platform, strode down the aisle, paused before the black-eyed stranger, and leveled his finger straight at the black eyes.

"You're the man who killed Sam Blake," he accused.

Black-eyes leaped. Without wasting a moment in denial, he sprang straight from his chair toward Stet's throat. Stet's fist cracked smartly against the other's chin. They clinched and thudded to the floor, sprawling and rolling over and over. Now the room became bedlam. The sprawling forms on the floor collided with chairs and rolled under benches, upturning them; fists flew and knuckles smacked against flesh. The fight went on furiously until Black-eyes broke away, and attempted to tear through the crowd. But Stet is an instant sprang up and hurled himself anew upon the stranger. Fists flew and flesh slapped again. A trickle of red was streaming from a cut under one black eye; the shirts of the two men were ripped to ribbons. Finding himself at the end of his strength, the desperate Black-eyes snatched up a chair, swung it upward, and whirled it down; but Stet stepped alertly aside, grasped the chair, tore it from the grasp of the others, and, swinging it upward himself, crashed it against Black-eyes' head. The chair broke into fragments. And Black-eyes went to the floor, groaning, half unconscious.

Stet flung himself upon the writhing form.

"Tell 'em!" he commanded. "Tell 'em!"

Black-eyes only moaned. Stet's palm cracked against Black-eyes' cheek.

"Tell 'em you shot Sam! Tell 'em!"

Fear of additional punishment tore the confession from Black-eyes' lips:

"I did it!" he gasped. "I did it!"

Men lifted the battered stranger and bore him away. Others crowded around to heap praise upon Stet. But he paid no attention to them. As Black-eyes was carried through the door, Stet called to him, and put heartfelt gratitude into his voice.

"Thanks," he shouted, "for the bump!"

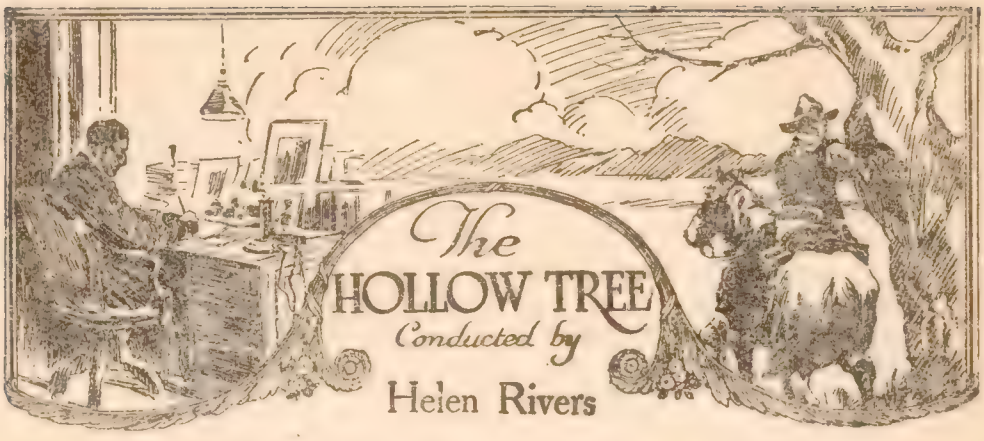
STONEY TRIBE INDIANS STAGE CONTEST

AT Banff, Alberta, the Stoney Tribe Indians recently staged a unique contest. All the contestants were divided into groups of two, a buck and his squaw. The contest called for each couple to hobble their pack horse, put up a tent, peg it all around, and start a fire, with the kettle on. Chief Jones Rider and his squaw won in six minutes. Several hundred Indians took park in the contest.

Historical Events of the West

GREAT NOVEMBER DAYS IN THE WEST

November 1, 1805.—Lewis and Clark pass last rapids of the Columbia.
November 2, 1812.—Wyoming's first tourists, the Stuart party from Astoria, camp for the winter.
November 2, 1852.—Greatest Sacramento fire wipes out town.
November 2, 1880.—Kansas goes dry.
November 3, 1885.—Tacoma expels all Chinese.
November 3, 1914.—Women win right to vote in Montana and Nevada.
November 4, 1871.—Arizona stage coach attacked by Indians, six passengers are killed.
November 5, 1824.—Patti and his son arrive in Santa Fe; beginning adventurous careers in West.
November 5, 1896.—The Cascade Locks on the Columbia finished.
November 6, 1864.—Montana's first church dedicated.
November 7, 1921.—Bandit holds up dining car in Idaho.
November 8, 1863.—Nevada City, California, burned for the fourth time.
November 8, 1881.—In a contest with Pueblo and Colorado Springs, Denver wins the capital.
November 9, 1856.—Sixty-seven Mormons die of cold and starvation en route in push-cart train to Salt Lake City.
November 10, 1602.—First landing of Spanish at San Diego.
November 10, 1893.—Relief expedition organized for men lost in Bitter Root Mountains.
November 11, 1865.—First mining district in Wyoming formed at South Pass.
November 12, 1869.—Railroad completed to Virginia City, Nevada.
November 13, 1833.—Joseph Walker and party camp within present boundaries of Yosemite National Park.
November 15, 1919.—Golden spike of San Diego & Arizona Railway driven.
November 17, 1882.—Big Bend Mining Tunnel, Feather River, begun.
November 18, 1849.—Several Argonauts find more than twenty ounces of gold, each, at Downieville.
November 18, 1858.—*Territorial Enterprise*, Virginia City, Nevada, founded. Mark Twain began his literary career with this paper.
November 18, 1895.—Nez Perce Reservation opened to settlement.
November 20, 1921.—Passengers on an Oregon-Washington train buried in snow slide; no one injured.
November 22, 1906.—Prairie fire burns over million acres in Texas and New Mexico.
November 23, 1873.—An assembly at Lewiston petitions Congress to add northern Idaho to Washington.
November 24, 1806.—Pike builds a fort on the site of Pueblo.
November 24, 1908.—First cent coined in the West is struck at San Francisco.
November 24, 1922.—Representatives of several States agree to the Colorado River project.
November 25, 1848.—Bill Williams leads Fremont's last expedition into the Rocky Mountains. They are lost and several die.
November 27, 1826.—Jedediah Smith reaches San Gabriel Mission, the first white man to cross overland to California.
November 28, 1864.—Kansas City sees its first train.
November 28, 1921.—Marshal Foch is made a Crow chieftain.
November 29, 1881.—Spokane incorporated.
November ? 1854.—California's largest nugget found in Calaveras County, weighing one hundred and ninety-five pounds.
November ? 1857.—Mormons burn Fort Bridger and fortify Echo Cañon to resist the United States army approaching.
November ? 1868.—Ground broken for the Santa Fe Railroad.



Miss Helen Rivers, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Rivers will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Letters will be forwarded direct when correspondents so wish; otherwise they will be answered here. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Hollow Tree.

OH, boy! "Ain't it a grand and glorious feelin'!" To pop right outa the blankets these crisp, snappy mornings—"brite an' erly," too, as the small boy puts it. Why, man, it's livin'! And it's good to be alive these days! Rollin' over to snatch another wink o' sleep just isn't in it.

Yes, yes, folks, I'm getting down to business, right now. What's that? Time to be planning Thanksgiving letters for our correspondence friends?

Good idea! And take a word of advice: make 'em long and merry. Don't let's pass out any gloomy thoughts, come Thanksgivin' time o' the year.

And now, to the letters:

First thing, here's one that takes us sailin' away over the blue.

DEAR HOLLOW TREE: I have read the WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE for some time, and have long wished that some girls in America would correspond with me. My greatest ambition is to come to America some day, but that day seems very far off. And this is the nearest I can get to it.

I am sixteen and I long for a chum. I know very few girls of my own age and am often desperately lonely. So I hope some American girls will take pity on me.

Very sincerely, NANCY JOHNSON.
Care of C. F. Johnson, A. M. P. Buildings,
Dunedin, New Zealand.

There's your chance, sisters, to get in touch with one of the far corners of the earth.

On our way back, I must tell you about "Orgonia." She doesn't live in Oregon, as you might expect, but in Washington, "where the timber line sweeps down from the Cascades to meet the logged-off lands, on one side the Cascades, on another the Olympics, and on still another, Mount Index, Saddle Mountain, and old Mount Pilchuck." Orgonia is nineteen, rides, shoots fairly well, and loves the out of doors. She would like to hear from sisters near her own age. Drop your letters in The Tree for her and I'll forward them.

Over the line into Oregon:

DEAR HOLLOW TREE: I live on an eighty-acre farm eight miles from the nearest town, right in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. We have beautiful country up here and I like to be out of doors.

I am sixteen and would like to hear from other girls of my age and from fourteen to twenty. I like to dance, but don't care much for dress. MABEL HARRIS.

R. F. D. No. 1, Box No. 57, Sublimity, Ore.

Another jump and we find John McMahon, 522 First Avenue, North, Great Falls, Montana. He is a Westerner, but not a rancher. He will be glad to answer letters, as that, he says, is his favorite pastime.

"Buckeye Girl," whose address I have, "would like especially to hear from sisters in Wyoming, Oregon, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and Idaho." She is eighteen, and will answer all letters regardless of the number.

Some say that "East is East and West is West." But when you run across a letter like this, who is going to be the judge?

DEAR HOLLOW TREE: I live in the East and think our section is very pretty. Can't see far because of the hills and trees. The Sabine River is twenty miles from here. I have always thought I would like the West best, among the mountains, though there are lots of things here to interest any one.

I would like very much to correspond with a Western cow girl who lives on a large ranch. I will be glad to tell any one who is interested what I can about this part of the world. Oh, yes, I am a girl.

JAY OF TEXAS.

H. Walton, care of Lake Lumber Company, Qualicum Beach, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, "would like to hear from some boys of seventeen who are interested in amateur photography." He has some good photographs of work in the woods, rigging a spar tree, et cetera, and he will be glad to give information regarding the logging industry along the Pacific coast.

And while we are on the coast, here's a letter from a "Native Son:"

DEAR HOLLOW TREE: I have never been in any other State than California, though I have been across the border into Mexico. I have lived in southern California most of my life, and I am twenty-four. I have prospected on the Mojave Desert and raised oranges and lemons in San Diego County. I am a great lover of horses and have done much riding.

Would like to hear from any other members of The Gang, and will be glad to answer any questions about California. Would be especially glad to hear from Brothers in Oregon, Washington, and Colorado.

G. C. STREETER.

Care of Bay Hotel, 24 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, California.

The Hollow Tree button, artistically enamelled in blue and gold, is a mighty attractive little badge, a real mark of good taste.

Send twenty-five cents in stamps, coin or money order to The Hollow Tree, Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, and state whether you want the button style to be worn in the coat lapel, or the pin.

"My father sent me the first WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE I ever read, several years ago when I was living in the mining camps in Arizona, and I have never missed a copy since." So says Mrs. G. A. MacKenzie, 1542 Mill Street, San Luis Obispo, California. She would like to hear from sisters of The Gang.

"Billy" of New York is a farmerette, an only daughter among several big brothers. She is interested in outdoor sports, and would like sisters to write her "via The Hollow Tree."

Here's another Gangster from New York.

DEAR HOLLOW TREE: I am eighteen, going to High and working in between times. At present I am a soda slinger, drug clerk, and all-round man, except prescription clerk, in a drug store here. My main ambition is to

be a draftsman, though, and as soon as I graduate I expect to get a job in that line.

Now for Kingston—there are some attractions, of course, such as movies. But who wants to go to the movies all the time? I always go when Tom Mix plays because I sure love that hoss of his. Being a natural lover of hosses myself, I long to have one, but circumstances prevent it. And just now I have to be content with loving the horses of others.

Another thing—won't some of The Gang find a monicker for me? Please try, won't you? I have several now, but don't like any of them.

I also want a real buckaroo from the West to write to. I want to have a heart-to-heart talk with some one who loves hosses as I do.

Best regards to The Hollow Tree and The Gang.

BILL METCALF.

26 East Strand Street, Kingston, New York.

Well, brothers, if Bill doesn't suit him, then it's up to you to find something else for him.

Thelma Wise, 12311 Wade Park Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio, is nineteen, a lover of the outdoors and of the West. She and two friends are planning a Cleveland-to-coast trip for the summer of 1924. She wants to hear from Westerners.

"Who am I? A fifteen-year-old girl. Name? Marian Ringgenberg. Where from? 417 Third Avenue, S. W., Rochester, Minnesota. I'll write to lonesome souls. I'm not lonesome, but I thought perhaps I could cheer some one up. I've traveled a bit, and I like all kinds of sports." What could be a fairer proposition?

DEAR GANG: Move over and let an ex-ranger into the ring. Have put in the last fifteen years in South and Central America, Panama, and Old Mexico, dealing in livestock—horses mostly. And later in the mining game, mostly among the Indians.

I find interesting the cure the Indians use for different things. For rheumatism they dig out a long hole in the sand, build a big fire in it and, when it burns down to coals, they put sand over the coals and sleep there. They repeat this until they are well; it takes about a week.

Drop me a line, Gangsters.

TEX DARDY.

74 Fairview Plaza, Los Gatos, Calif.

Any Hollow Tree sisters in Wichita Falls, Texas? Perhaps you will want to answer this letter.

DEAR HOLLOW TREE: I wonder if you could find me a companion. I am twenty-four years old and a poor girl. I play the piano and violin both and, if I had a girl friend who could accompany me on either instrument, I am sure we could entertain ourselves as well as add to our musical talent.

I am plain as an old shoe and could not tolerate any one who is a put-on. If there is a girl in Wichita Falls of about my own age and who would enjoy this, I would be glad to have her write to me at Post Office Box No. 283, Wichita Falls, Texas.

J. E. Ryan, better known as "California Slim," Gardnerville, Nevada, speaks:

Last time I wrote I was riding for an outfit down in northern California, but old Spots and I got tired of chapparel and menzenita and decided to pull over into the Silver State and feed up on sagebrush honey. So here we are up in the head of the famous and beautiful Carson Valley, a valley fifty miles long and twenty miles wide at the widest point, with snow-capped mountains rising sheer from the floor of the valley. And Gardnerville nestles at the foot of old Mount Jupiter.

If any one wants to know about California or Nevada just tell him to write to California Slim.

War brides from the Marylebone District, London, England, a plea comes to you from your one-time chum, Katie Silk, now Mrs. Thomas, Rear Cottage, Second Floor, 1458 West Seventeenth Street, Chicago, Illinois. Sit right down now and write to her, for she's mighty lonesome for some of her school-girl friends.

Sister Anna Hohman, 106 Fourteenth Street, Altoona, Pennsylvania, is a farm girl now at work in a factory. She isn't very happy, and it would cheer her up

a lot if some of the farm Sisters would write her.

William Donohue, 529 East Colvin Street, Syracuse, New York, is twenty-one and a cheerful sort of person. He and his pal plan a trip through the West next year and would appreciate a lot of advice on what to do and what not to do. He says he has lots to talk about, so write to Brother Bill.

Another ten-year-old member of The Gang, but this time Sister Peggy McLain, Box 503, Cordova, Alaska. She has three sisters who go out and play, but she likes much better to read The Hollow Tree. She likes cowgirls and cowboys and wishes some of the girls in The Gang would write to her.

M. J. Ellison, 267 Sibley Street, Hammond, Indiana, is interested in hunting and trapping and would like to hear from hunters and trappers in the Northwest.

Give this Brother the information he needs. Leo Katainen, Box 254, Cobalt, Ontario, Canada, wants to know the price of a western stock saddle, second-hand or new, also the price of a fancy riding bridle.

Lloyd Laswell, Kuna, Idaho, wants some old miner to tell him how to make the acid test for gold. Also he asks:

Is gold ever found in or near lava rock? Can flour gold be panned out of fine sand? If not, how is it taken out of same?

Will some of our prospecting Brothers help him out?

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING IN CALIFORNIA

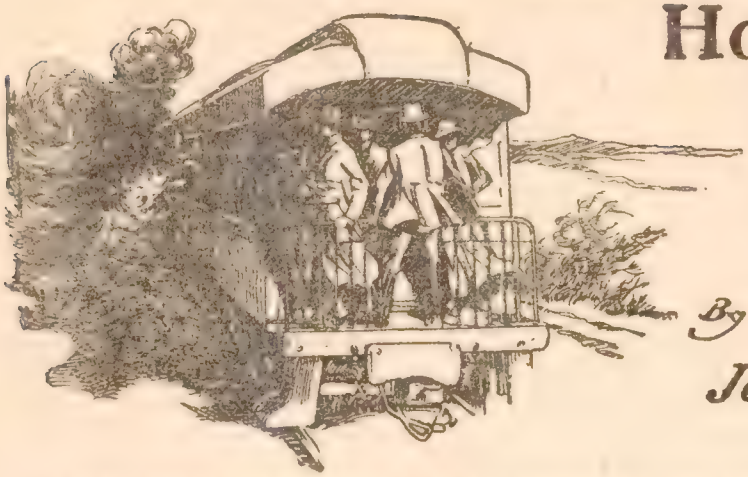
ACCORDING to the officials of the various hiking clubs of San Francisco, the number of hikers who journeyed up streams from California's sunny coast to their sources in residential glaciers, miles high in her mountains, was larger this year than in any past year.

Four large parties and many smaller ones, composed of both men and women, spent two to four weeks of July in the regions of mountain sheep. They climbed peaks that tower from thirteen to fourteen thousand feet above the sea. Pack trains accompanied them to the trail's end; from here, armed with sleeping bags on their backs, the mountaineers pressed on to the summits, which in many cases had to be reached with the aid of ice pick and rope.

The Sierra club contingent, about two hundred strong, mobilized in the Yosemite Valley and climbed to the heights beyond, through rugged Pate Valley, abode of the rattlesnake and bear, to the glacier-formed Benson Lake and the bold serrated Matterhorn Cañon. With a party of fifty the California Alpine Club also met in the Yosemite Valley and climbed the wide glacier of Mount Lyell, to the top of the rocky peak, thirteen thousand and ninety feet high. Later, by means of a steel rope fifteen hundred feet long, they pulled themselves up the glaciated sides of Half Dome, on the summit of which, according to a legend, the goddess of the valley reigned over the Yosemite.

Mount Whitney, the highest peak of the United States, exclusive of Alaska, was surmounted by a party led by Walter Archenbrenner. From their vantage point of fourteen thousand five hundred and two feet they could look down from snow fields to the place where Death Valley lay shimmering in the heat below sea level.

Where To Go and How To Get There



By *John North*

It is our aim in this department to be of genuine practical help and service to those who wish to make use of it. Don't hesitate to write to us and give us the opportunity of assisting you to the best of our ability.

Address all communications to John North, care of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

INDIAN RESERVATIONS OF THE WEST

THERE is no more picturesque and romantic figure in the story of our great West than the Indian. From the days when he opposed the advance of the early Spanish conquerors, down through the pioneering era of the frontier, when he harried the settlers and covered-wagon adventurers in their task of pushing the white man's empire farther and farther westward, and even in the present period, when, having absorbed the white man's civilization, he fought side by side with him on the battlefields of France in the late World War, the Indian has always been a brave, grim, intrepid fighter.

It stands to reason that the vast territory west of the Mississippi could not have remained forever a hunting ground for the red man. Civilization and progress demanded its development. To have allowed it to remain virgin wilderness would have stamped us as a backward nation. Thus it was that the reservation plan of dealing with the Indians was adopted. In a general way, this may be described as a treaty with the Indians whereby they agreed to allow white settlers to develop their country in consideration of being left in undisturbed possession of a certain reserved area and receiving certain payments, either in the form of money or supplies or produce. This arrangement was fair enough, inasmuch as it gave the Indian sufficient territory for his needs. guarded him against encroachment on the part of the white settlers, and guaranteed him government protection and supervision in developing his land. The fact that many injustices were done, in the practical working out of this plan, may be set down generally as due to the greed of settlers who had designs on the Indians' lands and made petitions and misrepresentations to the government at Washington, thereby inducing officials to make rulings in their

favor and detrimental to the Indians. Unfortunately, politics plays a strong part in our national life, and even our very best statesmen and executives are influenced by the wire pulling that is constantly going on. They are misled and deceived as to facts. Hence, they are apt to give unjust decisions based on those misstated facts. But it is not my purpose to go into a discussion of old controversies as to whether injustice has been done the Indian. Rather, I want to show something of the way the Indians are living on their reservations at the present day, how they have progressed in their manner of cultivating the soil, manufacturing, and stock raising, and how they are adapting their racial traits to their changed circumstances.

Every visitor to the West should make it a point to see the Indian reservations which are scattered here and there throughout the Western States. He will find the day or so spent on the reservation well worth while, probably the most worth while of his entire trip. In this series of articles, I am going to tell just where the various reservations are to be found, the kind of Indians that dwell on each, something of their traditions, history, and tribal customs, their present mode of livelihood, and their progress in recent years.

The reservations are under the direction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs at Washington, D. C. This is one of the bureaus of the Department of the Interior, and it has been functioning since 1824. At the present time, there are some three hundred and seventy treaties with different tribes on the statute books, and some two thousand laws relating to Indian affairs. Since 1871, however, no further treaties have been made, as it was felt that the making of these pacts was an acknowledgement of an independent sovereignty within the limits of the United States. Previously existing treaties were safeguarded, nevertheless, by the enactment of March 3d of that year.

Two thirds of the Indians in the United States are citizens, and the remaining third can easily acquire citizenship under the existing regulations. The chief requirement is the taking up of the habits of what is generally known as civilized life, and separation from the tribal mode of living.

According to official records, the Indian population of the United States is three hundred and forty thousand nine hundred and seventeen. The significant thing about this figure is that it marks an increase in the past decade of about thirteen thousand five hundred, or something like four per cent. Thus, it is no longer apt to speak of our aborigines as a "vanishing race." It is true that the "blanket Indian" is gradually passing, for the younger generation see the advantage of adopting the white man's methods. The reservation Indian of today, too, is progressing and developing the resources of his land. Modern methods of sanitation have been introduced into his home through the instrumentality of the Indian bureau, and he has had some ideas of hygiene and health preservatoin instilled by the same agency; so that the death rate has been greatly reduced and the ravages of disease allayed during the past decade.

The States having the largest Indian population are: Oklahoma, 119,158; Arizona, 43,327; New Mexico, 21,569; South Dakota, 23,448; Minnesota, 13,326; California, 16,000; Montana, 12,648. The various tribes with which most of us are familiar are situated as follows: Navajos in Arizona and New Mexico, 31,343; Sioux in North and South Dakota, Nebraska, and Minnesota, 32,885; Chippewas in Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and Wisconsin, 22,092; Pueblos in New Mexico, 10,246; and the Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma, with approximately 101,500 enrolled members. These tribes

are the Cherokees, numbering 41,824; the Chocktaws, 26,828; the Creeks, 18,761; the Chickasaws, 10,966; and the Seminoles, 3,127.

I cite these figures, not because I am fond of statistics, or because I expect any of my readers to remember them, but merely to show the numerical strength of the race at the present day. The Indians who remain under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior are wards of the nation. Their property is held in trust for them and administered for their benefit, just as a trust company will manage an estate. That some officials in the past may not have fulfilled this trust, may not have acted for the best interests of the Indians, is no reflection on the system. Whatever mistakes or injustices may have been inflicted in the past, it would seem that Indian affairs at the present time are being administered with intelligence and with due consideration for the welfare of the bureau's charges. As the Indians show themselves competent to take care of their business independently of the Indian bureau, they are released from its supervision. Practically one third of the Indians in the United States have ceased to be the government's wards. Under the General Allotment Act, an Indian receives an allotment of land from the government under a trust patent. This carries with it the restriction that he must not dispose of it for twenty-five years. Other legislation permits what is known as a "patent in fee" to be issued to the Indian on his allotment. This is done in the case of Indians who are competent to handle their own affairs, and gives them full control of their land. Eighty per cent of the Oklahoma Indians of the Five Civilized Tribes have thus become emancipated from government trusteeship. They no longer need such supervision of their affairs.

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE:

BLACK NUGGET

At the risk of being accused of mixing our metaphors, we will announce that this is a whale of a horse story. The author knows his horses and loves them. That's why he writes of them so understandingly and with such fine sympathy. A complete novelette.

By Kenneth Perkins

IT'S WORTH IT

A prospecting yarn that tells of one of the fine friendships that companionship out in the wilds breeds between men, and the way such a friendship met its crucial test.

By Hugh F. Grinstead

CATS FOR A CAPTURE

Out in the Western mountain regions, the cougar is a creature that often furnishes exciting moments for incautious wanderers in the forests. In this case, however, Mr. Cougar was something of a hero.

By Russell Arden Bankson

Further installments of "The Sage Hen," by F. R. Buckley, and "Long Eve of Cross T," by George Gilbert, and several other splendid stories of the West.

ORDER YOUR COPY IN ADVANCE

MISSING

This department is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

MRS. LOUISE LYMAN requests her son to write to her at once, no matter what has happened. She loves him and is very anxious to hear from him. She hopes he will see this and write to her at once. Milford, Pennsylvania.

ESTES, DOCTOR L. B.—Leslie would like very much to hear from you. Have had the same bumps you have had. Let us forget them. C. L. Estes, Box 72, Douglas, Arizona.

HALE, RAFARD.—He was last seen at Newport News, Virginia, in 1917. His home is believed to be in Big Stone Gap in that State. He is asked to write to his old pal who went into the army with him, and who will be glad to hear from any one who can tell him his present address. L. Brickey, Company C, Twenty-fourth Infantry, Fort Benning, Georgia.

HOWE, ROSWELL E., formerly of Roanoke, Virginia, and of Valparaiso University. He was a traveling salesman for a tobacco manufacturing company, and when last heard from was in New York City. An old college chum would like to hear from him, and will greatly appreciate any information as to his present whereabouts. Doctor C. J. Lodyga, Mercer Hotel, Kansas City, Missouri.

HOSACK, IRWIN C.—He joined the army at St. Joseph, Michigan, in 1920, and when last heard from was an ambulance driver at Fort McKinley, Manila, Philippine Islands. His sister would gratefully appreciate any information that would help to find him. Mrs. Florence Sumler, 636 East New York Street, Indianapolis, Indiana.

WHITNEY, ACE.—We want to hear from you, have had no word since you left Fresno, and mother and dad are worried. Any one who knows where this young man is will do a great favor by writing to Jasmine G. Whitney, 1960 Vista Del Mar Avenue, Hollywood, California.

BAKER, FRANK.—He is the son of Oscar Baker, who died in Adair, Oklahoma, early last spring. Frank was with his father a few days before he died, when he left, saying he was going to Ponca City, Oklahoma. He has not been heard from since. Any information that will help to know where he is will be greatly appreciated by Mrs. Hattie M. Fray, Adair, Oklahoma.

LAMBERT, WILLIAM BRAY.—He left Atmore, Alabama, and went to Birmingham in February last, and was there married to Lura Moore. His mother has not heard anything of him since April, and is very much worried, as he is not yet of age and his health is poor. Any information that would help to find him would be gratefully appreciated by Mrs. E. B. Lambert, Church Street, Atmore, Alabama.

ROGERS, FATE.—He went by the name of W. M. Cunningham, and was last heard from in British Columbia about thirty-five years ago. His relatives would like to know if he is living and will appreciate any information about him. L. L. Lowe, 2315 Searle Street, East Chattanooga, Tennessee.

DEBOICE, WALTER.—He and his brother were placed in a home in Coldwater, Michigan, when they were small boys. The brother is now at home again and would be very grateful for any information that would help to find Walter. Charles Deboice, 326½ West Jefferson Street, South Bend, Indiana.

WILSON, EMORA A.—He is twenty years old, about five feet four inches in height, with blue eyes and light-brown curly hair, and was last heard from in Trinidad, Colorado, in August, 1920. His sister will gratefully appreciate any information as to his whereabouts. Mrs. Violet V. Boop, 721 South Elliott Street, Muncie, Indiana.

HUSTON, DONAL EARL.—His mother is longing to hear from him, and will keep his whereabouts a secret if he will only write. Mrs. Clarissa B. Dynes, 1019½ South Liberty Street, Muncie, Indiana.

C. J. T.—Read your letter. Please write to me in care of this magazine. M. L. R.

MERRIWETHER, ESMOND.—Please communicate with your wife at once. It is very important that you send to her for the child's sake.

JOHNSON, SAMUEL MONROE.—He is colored, is about thirty-eight years old, and was born in Birmingham, Alabama. He is asked to write to his sister Clare in care of this magazine.

K. E. B.—Let us know if you are all right. Your sisters and I are worried about you. I cannot sell the house without your signature. Please write. C. T. B.

WHITE, MERRITT.—In the fall of 1917 he lived at 530 South Ross Street, Santa Anna, California, and has not been heard from since that time. A friend would like to hear from him, or from any one who can give his present address. Burnel V. Olson, Leonardville, Kansas.

FISHER, KEITH.—Please write to mother at home, and also to me, and let us know your address. Write to me at Standard Oil Camp 30, Whiting, Indiana. Your brother, Lyle.

BODOT, JOHN PETER.—He was last heard of as an employee of the Sacramento Smelting Works, at Sacramento, California, about 1874. Friends or relatives of his are asked to write to Doctor J. N. Bodot, 201 McCarthy Building, Syracuse, New York.

MORGAN, JOHN J.—He came from Canada, and is a hard rock miner. He is over six feet tall, with brown hair, blue eyes, and white, even teeth. He was last heard from in Florence, Arizona, in 1910. He is about thirty-five years old. A friend would like to hear from him and will greatly appreciate any helpful information. Z. S. G., care of this magazine.

WELLS, HENRY, or his relatives, **FRED TRIPP** or **PERLEY HUNT.** I have been lost to most of my relatives all my life and would be very happy to hear from any of them. I am twenty-six years old, and my name was Hunt. Mrs. Gladys M. Whiting, R. D. 1, Dover-Foxcroft, Maine.

FLEMING, MARY.—She left Dublin, Ireland, in 1873, for Philadelphia, and when last heard from was living at 718 South Seventeenth Street, that city, in 1877. A friend would like very much to hear from her, or from any one who can give news of her or who knows her present address. John Byrne, 14 Lower Gardiner Street, Dublin, Ireland.

STALLSWORTH, JOHNNIE.—He is asked to write to his mother, who is very much worried about him, and will be most grateful to any one who can tell her where he is. Any one who knows him will do a favor by telling him to write at once in his own handwriting to her. Mrs. Irene Buster, care of this magazine.

DONOGHUE, TOM.—Please let me hear from you. I hope everything is all right with you and that you will write as soon as possible. E. C. S., care of this magazine.

JONES, TOM and **DAISY.**—They are colored, and were last heard from in Durham, North Carolina, at 756 Walker Street. Their son would be very glad to hear from them and hopes they will see this and write to him. He will be grateful for any information that will help him to communicate with them. Paul Jones, care of this magazine.

D. L., JR., "DARKIE."—I have been in Canada since I saw you. I should like very much to hear from you and have lots of news for you. Please write to me in care of this magazine. Ida Mae.

HILL.—I was put in the New York Foundling Hospital when I was a baby and was adopted in February, 1910, by Alois Jamborne and his wife, Rose. They were French people from Berwick, Louisiana. I do not know the given names of my parents. The family name is Hill. Any one who can help me to find my relatives will do a great favor, which will be fully appreciated, by writing to me. John Hill, Box 94, East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

FRAYER, FRANK, who was last seen in Buffalo, New York, is asked to write to his mother at once.

FINN, PETER.—He is about sixty-five years of age. He left his home in New York City some fifty years ago and has not been heard from since. When he left he had blue eyes and reddish hair. It was heard lately that he was in the vicinity of South Bend, Indiana. His sister Margaret longs to see him before she dies and hopes that he will see this and write to her. Any helpful information will be very much appreciated. E. J. Lent, Montrose, New York.

YOUNG, JOHN.—He was in San Francisco a short time ago and expected to go farther. Letters sent to him there have been returned. He has dark-brown hair and eyes, and is twenty-seven years old. His mother is very anxious to hear from him and will be grateful for any information. Mrs. Young, care of this magazine.

R. W. B., JR., of Brooklyn, New York, who left his home on March 17th last. Will not interfere with your plans, but must hear from you. Gloom.

CALLOWAY, MARY.—She is about twenty-seven years old, has jet-black hair and florid complexion, and when last seen lived on East Third Street, Alton, Illinois, ten years ago. Information as to her present address will be appreciated by C. C., care of this magazine.

BURNS, BEATRICE, who was last heard of in Easton, Pennsylvania, is asked to write to an old friend who has not heard from her for about seven years. M. J. R., care of this magazine.

CROOKSTON, MERRITT, also known as Dan Merritt. He was last heard of about ten or twelve years ago in Amarillo, Texas. Good news awaits him. Many efforts have been made to find him during all these years, but without success. Any one who knows his whereabouts, or who can give any news of him whatever, please notify Buddy, care of this magazine.

SIMON, JOHN X.—Have been searching for you everywhere and am awfully worried. Please write to me in care of this magazine. Best wishes. John Hamilton.

J. S. B.—Received your letter. We know of Baltimore. It is never too late. Come home at once to your family and to your dear mother, who longs for you. Will look for you at the place of your birth. Don't fail to come and start life anew. Dad.

CODY, FRENCH B., who was formerly a sergeant in Battery E, Fifth Field Artillery, is asked to write to his old pal, Smallchange, Heights, West Virginia.

SWIFT, FRED HERBERT, or **ESSELTON.**—He is an actor and tenor singer, and is thought to be in vaudeville at present. He has blue eyes and light hair. An old friend would like to hear from him, or from any one who knows where he is, and will greatly appreciate any helpful information. Doris Montrose, care of this magazine.

BEAUCHAMP, OSCAR E.—He was last seen in Fresno, California, where he was head waiter at the Hotel Fresno. He is of middle age, of French descent, has a brother living in Canada, and is a member of the Eagles. He left for San Francisco about two years ago, and an old friend, who has not heard from him since that time, would be very grateful for any information as to his whereabouts, and hopes he will see this and write to M. S., care of this magazine.

LA CLAIR, BILLY.—Miss you very much. Write at once in care of this magazine. Jack.

MARLIN, CLARK PATERSON.—His mother is very anxious to know where he is and begs him to write to her. She would also be glad to know the name of the person who sent her son's photo to her. Any information will be most gratefully received. Mrs. Belle Marlin, care of this magazine.

MOLL, ANTHONY (TONY).—He left Parkland, Pennsylvania, in April, 1913, with two men, one William Bodenghatz, and the other an Italian, for Montreal, Canada, to build railroads. Tony Moll is about fifty years old, six feet tall, of dark complexion, is of German descent, and was last heard from in October, 1913, when the other two men left him. He would not return with them. Any information about him would be gladly received by his children, who all love him and want him to come back. Please write to his son Clarence, care of this magazine.

CONNOLLY, JAMES.—He is an Australian by birth, thirty-six years old, and was last heard of nine years ago. Any one who knows his whereabouts will do a great favor by writing to his sister, Barbara Graham, 3631 Nevill Street, Oakland, California.

WATKINS, C. PARKER, twenty-two years of age, or his relatives, Claude E., Alice M., and Charles E. Watkins. Any one who can give information as to the whereabouts of any of these persons will do a favor by writing to F. G. H., care of this magazine.

BRIMER, JAMES H.—He is forty years of age, with black hair and eyes, about five feet five inches in height, and was last heard of in San Francisco. His daughter will greatly appreciate any information that will help her to find him. Myrtle Brimer, 308 Tenth Street, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

SHEEHAN, CLARENCE and **FRANCIS.**—They left West Hickory, Pennsylvania, in 1914, were in Seattle and Tacoma, Washington, for a while, and Clarence was last heard from in Portland, Oregon. They are asked to write to H. C. Sheehan, Pioneer, Texas.

MASTERS, FRANK C.—He has been gone about fourteen years, and his daughter is very anxious to find him. Her mother has died and the daughter has married since he left. She hopes he will see this and write to her. She will be grateful for any information as to his whereabouts. Mrs. Adaline Martin, Wharton, New Jersey.

FOURNIER, FRANCOIS, formerly of Company I, Twenty-third Infantry, Second Division, who served overseas, left Germany in 1920, and was last heard of in Massachusetts. Also **EDWARD McGRATH** and **GEORGE MULLEN,** of Brooklyn, formerly of Company L, Fiftieth Infantry, on the Rhine. They are asked to write to their buddy of France and Germany, Private Fred F. Ward, Battery C, Eighty-third Field Artillery, Fort Benning, Georgia.

FOGARTY, JACK, is asked to write to an old friend and send an address that will reach him. There is good news for him, if he will write to Georgia at her home address.

HARRIS, ELSIE.—She was married and left Charleston, West Virginia, about 1919, and was last heard from in Iowa. Her brother has not seen her since he was four years old, and does not know her husband's name. He will gratefully appreciate any information as to her whereabouts. Clyde R. Harris, Marmet, West Virginia.

JOE R.—Everything is all right. I am always glad to forgive. Father is very ill and I have needed you. Please write. Peg.

MILLER, WALTER A.—He is eighteen years old, about five feet nine inches tall, with dark-red hair and brown eyes, and was last heard of in Brantford, North Dakota. He has two brothers, Lester and Ralph, and a sister, Vernice. Two relatives would be glad to hear from him and will greatly appreciate any helpful information. Miller, care of this magazine.

ORR, ELIZABETH, and **HARRY,** formerly of Cincinnati, whose last known address was West Sixty-first Street, Chicago, Illinois. Please get in touch with M. P. N., care of this magazine.

SCOTT, MRS. A. A.—She lived at Humble, Texas, about five years ago, and was last heard from at Livingston, visiting her sister. At that time she lived in New Orleans. She has a fair complexion and red hair. An old friend would greatly appreciate any information as to her present address. Miss Dora M. Vick, 175 Fourth Street, Beaumont, Texas.

PUTZIER, CLAUDE.—Would like to hear from you soon. Please write to me in care of this magazine. R. Kelly.

LAWRENCE, ROBERT B.—Write to me as soon as you see this, and send address so that I can reach you by return mail. Very important. Lila.

BAREMORE, JOSEPH J., who left his home on August 11th last, and is on his way to Virginia, may write to his wife in care of this magazine.

MANNING, RUSSELL.—He was last seen in Owasso, Michigan, and last heard of in Kentucky. He is six feet tall, fair, with greenish-blue eyes. His uncle and aunt would like to hear from him and have important news for him from his guardian. Edna, care of this magazine.

BENSON, MRS. BENIE.—She left her home on August 2d last. Her mother and husband are grieving for her and beg her to return. Everything is forgiven. She is seventeen years old. Any information that will help to bring her home will be be gratefully appreciated by her husband. Tom Benson, Route 6, Box B-50, Los Angeles, California.

HIPSHER, LE ROY, North High student, last seen at Pelican Rapids, Minnesota, on August 3d last. He is sixteen years old, of medium height, fair complexion, with brown hair and dark-blue eyes. He has no money and is probably asking for rides. Is believed to be making for the Coast. His parents are in great grief at his absence and beg him to write or wire. They understand and everything will be all right. Any helpful information will be greatly appreciated. Please address Mrs. Hipsher, 1415½ Dupont Avenue, North Minneapolis, Minnesota.

DEBAUN, JOE, who was last heard from in Electra, Texas, please write to T. P. Powell, at Mexia, Texas.

WORLEY, JOHN.—He married Etha Long, who died about two years after the marriage. When last heard of he was in New Mexico. His wife's sister would like to hear from him, or from any of his people. Jewel Shoak, 210 West Main Street, Pawhuska, Oklahoma.

LAWRENCE, W. W.—Do everything possible to find a way to correspond with mamma, or for her to send letters to you. She is quite ill and does not go anywhere, not even to church. Mark is your friend, and with all of us believes in you. Your elder sister.

MORGAN, ADELAIDE, who left San Diego, California, in June, 1922, for Staten Island, New York. She is now fifteen years old, about five feet four inches tall, with light-brown hair and blue eyes. Any information as to her whereabouts would be gratefully received by a distressed friend. B. B., care of this magazine.

NOTICE.—I was adopted from the Tarrant County Children's Home Society of Fort Worth, Texas, in January, 1898 or 1899, when I was eight months old. I would be most grateful for any information that would lead to my identity. Mrs. J. C. K., care of this magazine.

CLEARY, THOMAS FRANCIS.—He left his home on February 26th last, and his mother is very much distressed about him. She hopes he will write to her and let her know where he is, and keep the promise he made to his dying father. She is suffering greatly on account of his absence, and begs him to be again the grand boy he always was, and return to her. Mrs. Annie M. Cleary, care of this magazine.

KERN, WILLIAM and **JOHN C., JR.**—Write to your mother. All her letters to you have been returned. Address 545 Sixth Avenue, same town.

AYMARD.—I was born in Pensacola, Florida, and am now about fifty-four years old. My mother died when I was an infant, and I have been told that my father died soon after. I was adopted by a W. H. Stanley, whose wife was said to be related to me. My father's name was Peter Aymard, and believe I have a brother, Louis, who is said to be the captain of a vessel. I have also heard that I have a grandfather named Pfoff, and that I have relatives in France. Any one who can give me information about these persons will do a great favor by writing to me. Mrs. B. F. Adams, 2106 Commerce Street, Dallas, Texas.

MONTGOMERY, HARRY E.—He is an auto mechanic, is twenty-one years old, and was last heard of in Denver, Colorado, in May, 1919. Information that will help to find him will be gladly received by his father, F. E. Montgomery, Franktown, Colorado.

HERBERT, FRANK.—His mother is in great distress and is very anxious to hear from him. Every effort has been made to find him, but without success, and it is hoped that he will see this and write without delay. Any one who knows him will do a great kindness by calling his attention to this notice and asking him to send word to his mother in Seattle at once. Frank R. Dinger, 818 Western Avenue, Seattle, Washington.

CURTIS, ROLAND.—He was last heard of between 1895-97, in Jackson County, Tennessee. He married Della Harris in 1895 or 1896. Information concerning both will be greatly appreciated by Mrs. W. B. Curtis, care of this magazine.

CANNON, BURREL.—He is the inventor of the dry-steam kilns, and at one time had an interest in many lumber concerns in the South. His niece Erma, the daughter of his sister Anna, would be thankful for any information that would help her to find her uncle. Erma Wetherton, P. O. Box 529, Fort Smith, Arkansas.

ELLIOTT, WILLIAM R.—His father is very anxious to find him and will greatly appreciate any information that will help him in his search. George E. Elliott, Gillespie, Illinois.

HIER, ED.—He was a member of Prov. M. P. Co., A. F. G., and was last heard of in Coblenz, Germany. He is asked to write to Robert E. Jones, Box 155, Big Sandy, Tennessee.

MIDKIFF, J. T., who was last heard of in Wichita Falls, Texas, in 1917, is asked to write to his parents, who want to see him very badly, or to his brother, Earl Midkiff, Emmett, Idaho, Box 551.

SCHERMERHORN, FRANCES.—She was last heard of at Watsonville, California, in 1921. She has a little daughter named Frances. An old friend would like to hear from her, or from any one who can give her address. Mrs. N. E. M., care of this magazine.

HITE, GEORGE, whose home was in Wichita, Kansas, is asked to write to his daughter, Mrs. Maud Fay, Pasco, Washington.

HANNA, BYRON, who was last heard from in Miami, Arizona, is asked to write to Bert Hanna, of Nucla, Colorado.

DANIELS, DAISY DEANE.—She was a singer and lived in Atchison, Kansas, about seventeen years ago. She was then about eighteen years old. It was heard that she had married and had one little boy. She is asked to write to a very close friend, who will be glad to hear from any one who can give her address. Mrs. Anna B. Wilson, Route 1, Weir, Kansas.

SPENCER, ELMER, of Bridgeport, Meriden, and Hartford. Have you forgotten Barney? A. T.

PHILLIPS, LEONA.—She was born five miles from Paris, Louisiana, and is now about fifty years of age. She has not been seen since 1890. She lived with guardians whose names are unknown. Information that will help to find her will be greatly appreciated by G. A. B., care of this magazine.

BENGIE, BOB-A-LINK-A-HORN.—Your sister Matie is longing to hear from you. Address 560 Steiner Street, San Francisco, California.

BAILEY, WILLIAM R., formerly in the U. S. Cavalry, Third Troop, last seen in Florida during the past winter, and last heard from in Baltimore. Any one who knows his whereabouts will do a favor by writing to his friend, E. W., care of this magazine.

KINGSFORD, RILEY.—When last heard of he was living in Lakewood, New Jersey, where his mother was employed at the Laurel House. There is important information for him and he is asked to write to J. M. K., care of this magazine.

NEW, MITCHELL.—He is about twenty-five years old, with light-brown hair and blue eyes, and is about five feet six inches tall. He was last heard of in the U. S. navy, off the Atlantic coast. He was formerly of Amarillo, Texas. Information as to his present whereabouts will be appreciated by Edith Brooks, R. F. D. 2, Riverside, California.

BALLINGER, MRS. O.—Please write to Len in care of this magazine.

BLOCK, MRS. CELIA.—Her maiden name was Shimalwitz, and she was born in Russia. She came to this country about twenty-six years ago, and lived in New York City for about four months after her arrival. When last heard of she was near St. Louis, Missouri. Information as to her whereabouts will be gratefully received by Bernard Leirne, 20 North Seventh Avenue, Mount Vernon, New York.

KIDD, FRANK.—He was last heard of twenty-four years ago in the Shelbyville Orphans Home, Indiana, where he was placed when he was two years old. He is now about thirty-two, and has blue eyes and light hair. His sister will gratefully appreciate any information that will help to find him. Mrs. Allie Williams, R. R. 1, New Palestine, Indiana.

LAUGHLIN, WILLIAM and CHARLEY, who were last heard of in 1895, in Denver, Colorado. Their half brother would be glad to hear from them or from any one who knows them, or who can tell where they are. Thomas F. Laughlin, Proctor, Minnesota.

BILLIE, W. L. M.—I have information that you should know of at once. Delay may cause you trouble. Send your address at once to Joe M., Box 390, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

THOMPSON.—T. E. Thompson died October 10, 1887. He had a brother, Howard, and two sisters, Lula and Lillie. It is hoped that some one who knows them will see this and write to their relative, Mrs. C. E. Halverson, Box 145, Bruneau, Idaho.

HINMAN, ORVILLA.—She was born March 4, 1907, and was placed in the Lewiston Home of Idaho on February 28, 1918. All trace of her has been lost. Her sister is seeking her. Also **JAMES GARTEN DUNN**, who is fifty years old, is a blacksmith, and worked in mines in Montana and Idaho. He was known as Jim the Blacksmith, and is an old friend. Information about these two persons will be gratefully received by Jessie Hinman, Star Route, Springdale, Washington.

CRAVEN, MRS. EDITH.—She was last heard of in April of this year, when she was in Los Angeles. Her maiden name was Stoneking. She is asked to write to J. M. H., in care of this magazine, who will appreciate any information as to her present address.

BALE, WALTER, or any one who knows his address, please write to V., in care of this magazine.

RAMOND, WILLIAM.—He is forty-five years old, heavy set, with blue eyes and dark hair, and was last heard from in Galveston, Texas, in February, 1916. His mother has been an invalid for over two years and grieves for her son, who was always so kind to her, and will be most grateful for any information that will help her to find him. He was not married, and worked for years with horses in Lexington, Kentucky. Mrs. M. C. Jennings, care of this magazine.

MORRIS, JOHN.—He is seventeen years old, with red hair, brown eyes, prominent moles on his face, and is five feet ten inches tall. He left home June 23d last, to work on Union Pacific construction in Wyoming, and has not been heard from since. His mother is greatly worried and begs him to write to her or to his sister. Any one who can give news of him will do a great favor by writing to his sister, Mrs. Hattie Grandy, 401 Lake Street, Topeka, Kansas.

B. A. D.—Your letter brought great joy. Have been ill with anxiety and have searched for you everywhere. Am in Milford, write me there and please arrange meeting at once. I need you now as never before, and will come to you if you prefer. Nothing but love awaits you. L. O. U.

ROLLISON, MAE.—When last heard of she was at 208 Wilson Avenue, Columbus, Ohio. Information as to her present address will be greatly appreciated by S. Thompson, Battery E, Fifteenth Field Artillery, Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

DENSHAM, MRS. A. G., whose maiden name was Florence Medley. She was born in Acton, Ontario, Canada, in 1901. Her parents separated in 1906, and her mother has never seen or heard from her since. It was heard that she had married about five years ago, and lived in the United States. Her mother is very anxious to hear from her, as she is now alone, and will gratefully appreciate any information that will help her to know her present whereabouts. Mrs. Mabel Harris, care of this magazine.

DARAGON, LOUIS, formerly of Montreal. Please get in touch with Montreal Commercial Trust, 17 St. James Street, Montreal, P. Q., Canada.

CREASON, LUCILLE.—She was last seen in Oklahoma City, February 15, 1922. She has a sister who married a man named Lester Hampton. Any one who knows her whereabouts, or who can give any news of her, will do a great favor by writing to Billie, 1403 Corsicana Street, Dallas, Texas.

SUPERIOR performance had made the Hupmobile especially conspicuous among motor cars, even before the coming of this new series.

Performance in the new Hupmobile is distinctly and materially improved, so that the car is even quicker in get-away and pick-up, even steadier in straight going, and decidedly more powerful in its entire speed range.

This definite enhancement of Hupmobile value is big enough and important enough to engage the serious attention of every motor car buyer this fall.

The New Hupmobile

Hupmobile designers recognize that winter comfort in a touring car or roadster is almost entirely dependent on the side curtains, and they have gone great lengths to provide maximum comfort.

The curtains of the new Hupmobile do far more than open with the doors. They fit so perfectly, and are held in place so firmly, that one is hardly conscious of the cold, raw wind outside.

The curtains are metal-framed and are always taut and trim—completely assembled, with no rods to select or adjust, and always ready for attachment at a moment's notice. They are stowed flat—never rolled—in a special pocket at the back of the front seat, so that the lights are not scratched or broken.

All their fastenings are so arranged that the curtains can always be put in place without the driver or any passenger leaving the car.

But even such comfort and convenience are of small consequence unless accompanied by the staunch reliability and the much finer performance of the new Hupmobile.

Our engineers have increased not only the power but the economy of the famous Hupmobile engine. They have given fine performance a new and higher meaning, and they have built longer years of life into the sturdy chassis.

If you are sincerely desirous of getting the most for your money—if you have not yet seen the longer, larger, more beautiful new Hupmobile—we urge you to inspect it closely and ride in it before you buy any car.

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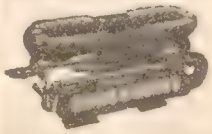

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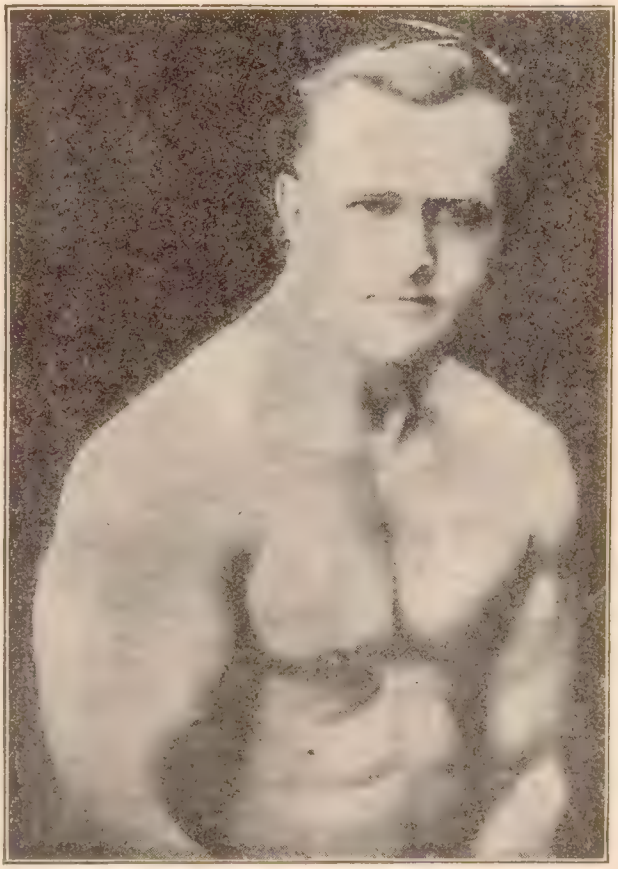
Modern science has taught us that we must keep our bodies physically fit or our mental powers will soon exhaust themselves. That is why the successful business man resorts to golf and other active pastimes.



Earle E. Liederman as he is to-day

Examine Yourself

Do you have the strong, robust body which keeps you *fit* at all times to tackle the daily tasks confronting you—always looking for bigger things to do? Do you jump out of bed in the morning full of pep; with a keen appetite and a longing to enter the day's activities? Do you finish your daily tasks still thrilling with pep and vitality? Or do you arise only half awake and go through a languid day?

Pep Up!

Don't let it get you, fellows. Come on out of that shell and make a real *he* man of yourself. Build out those skinny arms and that flat chest. Let me put some real pep in your old backbone and put an armor plate of muscle on you that will make you actually thrill with ambition. I can do it. I guarantee to do it I will put one full inch on your arm in just 30 days and from then on, just watch 'em grow. This is no idle boast. It's the real works. A genuine guarantee. Come on now. Get on the job and make me prove it.

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It contains forty-three full-page photographs of myself and some of the many prize winning pupils I have trained. Some of these came to me as pitiful weaklings, imploring me to help them. Look them over now and you will marvel at their present physiques. This book will prove an impetus and a real inspiration to you. It will thrill you through and through. All I ask is 10 cents to cover the cost of wrapping and mailing, and it is yours to keep. This will not obligate you at all, but for the sake of your future health and happiness, do not put it off. Send today—right now, before you turn this page.

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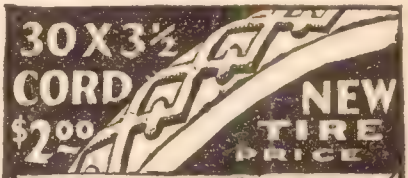

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32x3½	2.50	.90	34x4½	4.00	1.65
31x4	2.75	.90	35x4½	4.25	1.65
32x4	3.00	1.40	36x4½	4.25	1.65
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Cuticura Soap is the favorite for safety razor shaving.

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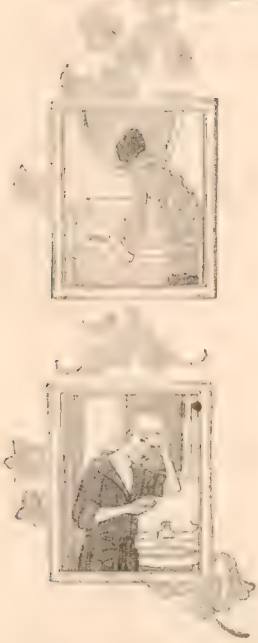

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You will find what a pure, white floating soap means to you in toilet or bath.

The glistening, shimmering lather is a revelation.

So quickly produced! So easily rinsed off! And then how clean!

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It's white! It's pure! It floats!

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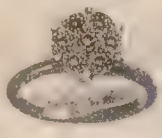

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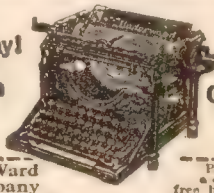

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Name .....

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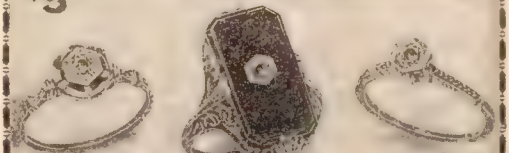

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[illegible] ment ring. [illegible] yellow gold [illegible] fect cut blue white diamond. **$75.00**

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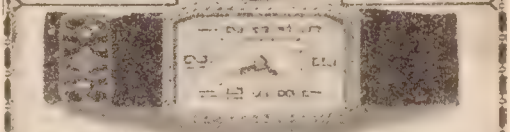

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By WILLIAM WEST WINTER

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18-k White Gold, 17 Jewels, $35; 14-k, 15 Jewels, $29. Yours for $3.50 down, then **$1.00** a Week until paid.

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BINGHAMTON, N. Y.

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Unless you see the name "Bayer" on package or on tablets you are not getting the genuine Bayer product prescribed by physicians over twenty-two years and proved safe by millions for

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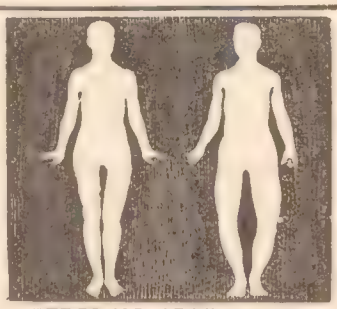

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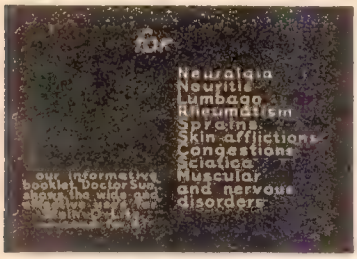

"That's it Mother . . . . . Ah, that feels good!"

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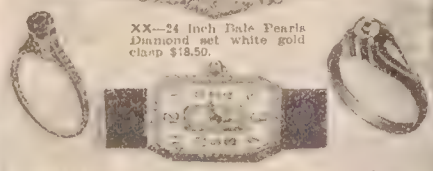

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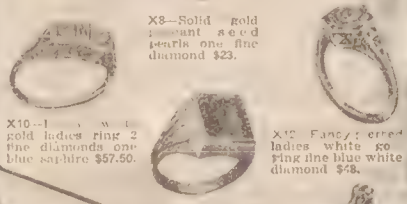
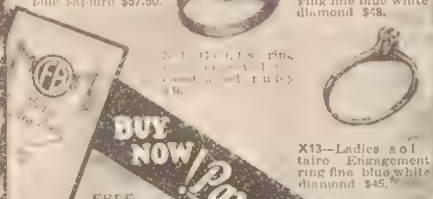
X9 Ladies [illegible] white gold [illegible] cluster platinum set $48.50.



X8—Solid gold [illegible] pearls one fine diamond $23.

X10—[illegible] gold ladies ring 2 fine diamonds one blue sapphire $57.50.

X12 Fancy [illegible] ladies white go ring fine blue white diamond $48.



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Pure Coconut Oil

and

A SUGGESTION OF HENNA

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